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*BLINDS DOWN:*

*A CHRONICLE OF CHARMINSTER.*<sup>1</sup>

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CHAPTER III.

ENTER DEREK DEVENISH.

ROSE was allowed certain recreations denied to Rosetta. She learned to play tennis well, to ride, and to dance. The dancing classes were held at the Vicarage during the winter, when a mistress came once a week from London. Rosetta, without lessons, had taken to dancing nearly as quickly and easily as a swallow learns to fly, but Rose, not so graceful, had to be taught carefully.

At the first dancing class, when she was nine years old, she met Derek Devenish, a handsome boy of fourteen. After that winter Derek voted dancing a bore, and never appeared again as a pupil, but he met Rose frequently, and she developed for him the same extravagant admiration which Septimus Lovibond had inspired long ago in Rosetta.

The Devenish family had come to Charminster just after Lord Brough's death. They were 'quality,' and received as such by the townspeople, who wondered what wind had blown the strangers into so quiet a port. The obvious answer was poverty, against which the best have to trim sail. Somehow it was understood, after many repetitions, that Mr. Devenish might have 'done anything,' so often an excuse for doing nothing. Laura Poggany, on the eve of becoming a bride, spoke of him as 'dashing.' He had a distinguished air, and a leg that would bear comparison with Sir Willoughby Patterne's. His position became impregnably secure when it was known that the Misses Mauleverer had called upon Mrs. Devenish, a little

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nondescript woman with a nervous manner and a frightened expression in her eyes. Derek was the only child.

Within a year, it leaked out that Mr. Devenish, whose name figured honourably in 'Burke,' held smashing views on subjects dear to the heart of Charminster. He knew intimately Anti-Christ, as the famous member for Northampton was then called. He scoffed at parsons, doctors, lawyers, and schoolmasters, disposing of them collectively as 'humbugs, thieves, and liars.' This was hard to bear, even from the third cousin of a marquis, but the fact that he was handsome tempered reprobation.

Mr. Devenish had taken upon a twenty years' lease a pretty cottage, with a garden sloping to the Char. In summer-time, Derek would punt up the stream to the Dower House, and invite the Aunts to spend an hour with him on the placid river. He taught Rose to punt, and suggested to the ladies the propriety of presenting a punt to their niece upon her next birthday, a suggestion gratefully adopted.

By this time the Aunts had almost forgotten the existence of Septimus Lovibond, and his flirtation with Rosetta. They were aware vaguely that Septimus was prosperous, for they heard once a year from his dear mother. It never occurred to them that history has an exasperating habit of repeating itself. They liked Derek, because he had curly hair and nice eyes, and of course he was a Devenish. The father's opinions did not affect them, because none quoted them to the ladies, certainly not Mr. Devenish himself, who drank tea out of the Nankin cups and discoursed about Oriental china, of which he was a connoisseur. He recognised the Misses Mauleverer as fine porcelain, and, like Dr. Poggany, spoke of them as *pâte tendre*. He challenged pity by describing himself as a man of losses, with no mention of the turf, where he had squandered a modest fortune. Derek was sent to the Charminster grammar school, much to the young gentleman's disgust. He said to Rose:

'I was put down for my father's old house at Eton when I was three years old.'

'Does it make much difference?'

'A lot. No use, though, trying to explain that to a kid.'

He called Rose 'Kiddy,' and 'Kid,' and 'Kidlet,' conveying the impression that she might thank her stars at being addressed by him at all.

She did.

When she was fifteen and Derek just twenty, the young fellow was pitchforked into the Charminster Bank, a private concern, owned and managed by Mr. Walkington. Derek raged furiously and impotently, threatening to enlist. Rose said :

'Why don't you?'

He thrust his hands into his pocket and pulled out sixpence.

'Heads I do, tails I don't. You call, Kiddie!'

'Derek, I daren't.'

'Bosh! Now then!'

He spun the coin.

'Heads,' murmured Rose.

'It's tails.'

This incident impressed Rose. She grasped the notion that she was a factor in Derek's life. If she had said 'tails' he would have inferred that she wished him to become a clerk. He knew now that she entertained ambitions for him, counselled a dash for the open, a flight into the blue.

As he pocketed the coin, he said, ruefully :

'I might have won the Victoria Cross.'

'You may yet.'

That challenged his attention. Evidently, the fall of the sixpence had not closed the affair for her. Then, very savagely, letting himself go, he said :

'Mother and I are under father's heel.'

'Derek!'

'You are old enough to know, and wise enough to keep a secret. I shall talk to you as I would to a sister. Thank the Lord, I haven't got one. He'd bully her too.'

Rose shivered, but she tingled with impatience to hear more.

'He's a brute to her. Everybody knows it, except your aunts. Everybody talks about it, which is so awful for her. Beats me, why she stuck to him.'

'Derek! You don't know what you are saying?'

'Don't I, just! Now, look here, if I tell you something, will you swear that wild horses won't drag it from you?'

'No, nor the tame asses in Charminster.'

'Kid, you're a rum 'un; that's why I tell you things. Now, don't jump out of your skin, but mark me well. I'm as strong as a bull, but he's stronger. Luckily, he's not quite so hefty as he used to be, and more or less out of condition. I'm fit, and

hard as nails. I can take a lot of punishment—and he can't. If I caught him on the point—point of the jaw, that is—he'd be down and out. Now—pull yourself together!—I'm going to do it—I'm going to thrash him, as he's thrashed me.'

Rose gasped.

'Not because he thrashed you?'

'No; because he's been such a brute to her. You don't know, Kid, you can't imagine, what a brute a man can be to his own wife.'

'I can imagine—horrors.'

The expression upon her face perplexed him. Out of some inner zone of subconsciousness rose the conviction that she did know. She tried to remember why she knew, and failed. But the odd feeling remained that brutality had come into her own life. She heard Derek saying in his passionate young voice:

'I have envied you, because your father is dead.'

That struck a chord. Instantly, she recalled the incident of her father letting her fall upon the back of her head. She beheld his hard face, his cold eyes, his grim smile.

'I'm a beast,' said Derek. 'I've frightened you, you poor little Kiddie. I oughtn't to have told you. I wonder why I did tell you?'

'Because you know that I'm your friend.'

'That's it.'

Long afterwards, she realised how much this talk had affected her. It bore immediate fruit in the reflexion that her home life was so amazingly different from Derek's. It engendered a desire to return some of the love showered upon herself. More than once, of late, she had avoided the daily walk with the Aunts to the high ground, where more bracing air might be inhaled. The ladies walked slowly, stopping often to admire some effect in the landscape or sky. Whenever she walked with her aunts, Rose was seized with a desire to run, the instinct of healthy youth to bound on, leaving age behind. She wanted, also, to outstrip their slow talk and halting thoughts. Always, the dear ladies stopped short when confronted by obstacles, turning back upon the well-trodden paths, afraid of the *vias tenebrosas*. Rose had come to the conclusion that youth and age were happiest in a punt. Youth with the pole, expending suppressed energies; age reclining upon soft cushions, watching with introspective placid gaze the world roll by. When the



ladies delivered themselves of some time-worn platitude, Rose could dig the pole viciously into the mud, and by the time she had pulled it out again all sense of exasperation had vanished.

Age, in the person of an elderly groom, accompanied her upon her rides, but she never hesitated to outstrip him, galloping away as soon as she reached the springy downs. She would return home slowly, partly to cool her horse, and also to cool her attendant, who was pledged to discreet silence.

After the talk with Derek, she walked patiently with the Aunts, smiled when they remarked that the 'trees were no longer in full beauty,' and made no comment if Aunt Prudence happened to observe for the thousand and first time that the liberty accorded to young people was likely to degenerate into licence.

Crump, with one eye round the corner, was well aware that the blinds remained down. And Rosetta's injunction was not forgotten. But the ancient handmaiden could not bring herself to break the unwritten law of the Dower House. At odd moments, when conscience pricked, she might throw off mysterious hints, which whetted curiosity without satisfying it.

'All is not gold that glitters,' she remarked to Rose.

'Is that your own, Crumpie?'

She called the ancient one Crumpie, because Rosetta had done so.

'No, Miss Rose; it's what you might call a maxim.'

'Now what does it convey to you?'

Crump would shake her head mysteriously, and squint dreadfully.

'Lor', Miss, can't I pass a remark without you snapping me up?'

Rose would be inexorable.

'Crumpie, what does it mean?'

Then, tremblingly, Crump would lift two inches of the blind.

'Well, Miss Rose, it means for one thing that under all the pomps and vanities, the eating and drinking, the laughing and singing, is a vast deal of misery.'

'Crumpie, have you ever been *very* miserable?'

'Who hasn't, Miss?'

'I haven't, for one.'

Then Crump would retire hastily.

'I don't know what your aunts would say, if they heard me chattering nonsense, and all the silver to clean, too.'

'I'll help to clean the silver—which is always so beautiful, Crumpie—if you'll tell me what made you miserable.'

But Crump was not to be drawn, even with the subtlest flattery.

When Rose was sixteen, Septimus Lovibond died. He had been failing in health for some time; and the Vicar of Charminster had long known that the end was inevitable. The obituary notices of Paul Newman were unanimous in declaring that the loss to literature was very great, although it was admitted that the author of 'Mists' had not quite realised the expectations which that famous novel aroused.

'Mists' was the first book to captivate the interest of the many. Rose had never heard Paul Newman's name. The vicar commended the novel to the Aunts, as one that would be likely to interest Rose. But he was careful not to mention that he had received a letter from the widow of the author, with the book, asking him as a particular favour to arrange that her daughter should read it. Rosetta concluded: 'It deals with life as seen through young eyes, and the treatment throughout is, to my mind, admirably suggestive, and free from the too mawkish sentimentality which does so much to spoil a girl's palate for really nourishing food. Perhaps you will read it yourself first.' The vicar did so, and was delighted.

By the luck of things, the book was not read aloud. Rose devoured it in two sittings. Little did she guess that every page was informed by her own mother, and that much of that mother's life was being described with a convincing realism entirely new to the daughter. Rose, for the first time, found her own nebulous thoughts put into words. 'Mists,' as the title indicated, obscured the vision of the principal characters in the story. At the end they soared above them. The novel is now so well known that any synopsis of it would be unwarrantable. Its effects upon Rose is the thing worth recording. Rosetta, perhaps, had not foreseen that the enjoyment of a book by a new author is certain to stimulate an inordinate appetite for more of the same fare. Vere read the book, and talked it over with Rose. The pair agreed that another novel by the late Paul Newman must be read at once. Prudence dipped into 'Mists,' became fogged, and fell asleep over it. She remarked to her niece:

'I am glad you like it, dear, but it is too modern for me.'

The author, however, seems to have been a scholar and a gentleman, and I see no objection to your reading other works from a pen so refined and restrained.'

'Thanks,' said Rose.

Had she consulted Aunt Jaqueline, there might have been objections, for Jaqueline had never been able to purge her mind of a most regrettable incident. She had read with delight Maupassant's 'Collier de Perles,' and had forthwith plunged into 'Bel Ami.' Having an ample supply of pocket-money, Rose bought Paul Newman's 'Back of Nowhere.' This was the Book (with the capital 'B') which Septimus had begun to write in New Zealand. He re-wrote it after his elopement with Rosetta, thanking Fate that he had not published it years before. In it he dealt drastically with himself and the Parbury System, describing with vivid realism his struggles and sufferings after he had lost health and fortune and love.

Before Rose was half-way through the book, she knew that the Aunts would be horrified at her reading it. But she was too fascinated to lay it aside, although sensible that conscience couldn't be salved with the reflection that she had obtained Aunt Prudence's permission to read it. Having read it, she made confession to the vicar, inviting him to impose a penance. The parson read it, also, and was certainly confounded, but comforted himself with the conviction that Rose couldn't have understood half the allusions.

'The penance is this,' he said. 'No more Paul Newman for Vere and you till you're out of leading-strings.'

Rose meekly acquiesced. Nevertheless the book had discoloured her imagination. It was awful to think that Derek might find himself at the Back of Nowhere, if he carried out his threat of thrashing his father. Living in a house with blinds drawn between herself and everything disagreeable, she had dismissed the awful possibility as 'unlikely' to occur. 'Back of Nowhere' sent her wandering with Derek into mining-camps and saloons, where the young fellow might be ruined body and soul, if 'it' did come to pass. That 'it' became a hair shirt upon her tender skin.

During the winter, she saw Derek but seldom. He worked at the bank from nine till five, growing daily more restless and irritable.

'In twenty years,' he told Rose, 'I may be assistant manager, with three hundred a year! Jolly, isn't it?'

'But you like Charminster, Derek?'

'Charminster is too old-maidish for me. I can't think straight in these crooked old streets. I can't breathe deep, can you?'

'I am very happy here. I love the place and the people.'

'But sometimes—let's have the truth—don't you feel a bit stifled?'

'Not yet,' she answered cautiously.

'These old towns are all right for old men and women; snug anchorage, I admit, but there's too much "rotting at ease." The worms are at work, Kid. One can sniff decay, the dry rot hidden under carefully waxed floors. That confounded bank reeks of it.' He threw back his shoulders. 'I want more room. Honour bright, now—don't you?'

Her blue eyes sparkled.

'And other company?' she suggested.

He laughed gaily, and when she heard that ringing laugh, she knew that Charminster wouldn't hold him long.

'You rum Kid! If I do cut and run, I shall often think of the Kidlet.'

'Not you.'

'I shall. You and the Aunts represent a lot to me: all I've not had—home, kindness, love.' He pulled himself together, and said rather stiffly: 'You understand?'

'Yes,' she whispered softly.

Another day, he said to her at the Vicarage:

'I've saved up twenty pounds—twenty jolly yellow-boys.'

'What for?'

'For emergencies, my young chick.'

She hardly slept that night.

The thought of decay—so abominable to the young—began to obsess him. On another occasion, he said to his *confidante*:

'We're all saprophytes here.'

'Gracious—what's that?'

'Maggots.'

'Oh, Derek—how nasty!'

His mouth flickered humorously.

'If I'm nasty to you, it's because Mrs. Easter thinks me "rather nice"! What an expression! Rather nice! Yes, maggots, burrowing busily into rotten conventions and tradi-

tions, unable to see or feel anything else. Pah! I should like to twang the banjo, while that old bank was blazing.'

Rose considered this. She did not present the appearance of a maggot, when she said slyly:

'You've got something to learn, Derek.'

'What?'

'To take things and people as they are instead of as you'd like them to be.'

'One for you, Kid; all the same, it's the spirit of discontent which keeps this old world pottering on.'

A month later the nightmare fear of losing his companionship became a fact. Derek thrashed his father with a heavy hunting-crop, scored him from head to heel, and fled the cottage with remorse in his heart and twenty-five pounds in his pocket.

Rose had the story red-hot from his quivering lips. Knowing her habits, he had waited till she returned from riding, and drew her aside into a corner of the stable yard.

'I've done it,' he said hoarsely. 'And I feel like Cain, not because I've licked him, but because I must leave her. Somehow I never once thought of that. It happened an hour ago, after breakfast. He ragged both of us at breakfast, sneered at us in his beastly cold-blooded way. We escaped, but he followed us into the passage, where his old crops hang on the wall. There he fairly let the mater have it, and the dining-room door was open, and the parlourmaid listening to every word. He swore at mother, the poor darling, and I told him to shut up. I was cool, Kid, but this had to come. I told him to shut up. I told him that if he didn't shut up, I'd make him. That, for the future, he would have to keep a clean tongue in his mouth. Well, that maddened him. He seized one of the crops, and let me have it on the top of the head. Then I saw red, and we went at it. I twisted the crop out of his hand, and I'll spare you the details.'

'And now?'

'I'm kicked out, of course—to sink or swim. I'll swim, never fear! Old Walkington won't sack me, because I've sacked myself.'

'And your mother?'

'I think that after this he'll leave her alone, because I told him, when he showed me the door, that if he didn't behave I'd

come back and kill him. I saw fear in his eyes. Good-bye, Kiddie.'

He held out his hand.

'Where are you going?'

'To Southampton. I'll write to you, when I get a billet.'

'Good-bye, dear Derek.'

He gripped her hand, and swung off, carrying a high head. She didn't see him very plainly, for her blue eyes were full of tears.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE AUNTS ENTERTAIN AMBITION.

TEMPEST raged in the Charminster tea-pot when the town heard the tale of the thwackings. Most persons were glad that Devenish had been soundly thrashed, but sorry that his son had done the deed. The horror of the Aunts may be taken for granted; and they refused to listen to details, which, in extenuation of her friend, Rose was eager to offer. Their attitude was exasperating to the girl, but not quite unexpected. A fortnight previously, a missionary from the slums of White-chapel had preached in the parish church. He was sent out—having a fiery eloquence of Salvation Army quality—by a society (not the S.P.G.) which concerns itself with rescuing the waifs and strays of London children. He preached with none of that refinement so dear to the Aunts.

'Go home,' he shouted, 'go back to your comfortable beds, and sleep in them soundly, if you can; but remember,' he shook a minatory finger at the Aunts, 'that in the slums where I come from children don't sleep in beds, but under 'em, and they have to turn out when half the night is over and go back to the streets, because other shivering children are waiting to take their place!'

In his excitement he dropped an 'h' or two; his hair was red and bristly; he suffered from some affection of the eyes; and his hands were a disgrace to the Church of England. The Aunts listened to the impassioned harangue, blinking short-sightedly at the preacher, wriggling upon the red cushions of their comfortable pew. Walking back to the Dower House, Prudence said with dignity:

'I can't believe that such things happen in our beautiful England.'

Rose opened her mouth to reply, but closed it. The futility of further discussion made her dumb.

Jaqueline murmured nervously :

'It is very cold. I should not be surprised if we had snow before night, or frost. Our daffodils may be nipped.'

At the Dower House, the name of Derek became *tabu*. He had broken the Fifth Commandment, and was therefore anathema. Rose received a letter from him, which she did not show to her aunts.

DEAR KIDDIE,—I have shipped as a sailor before the mast, for a voyage round the Horn. My present destination is San Francisco. It's going to be tough, but I'm tough stuff. I never told you that the mater has a small income of her own, and if he doesn't treat her better, she's promised me to leave him. So my mind is easier. Don't worry about

Yours ever, DEREK.

The last injunction was not obeyed. Rose read Dana's book, and dreamt that Derek was washed overboard. She could see his handsome face sinking to green depths, where monsters waited for him with hungry maws. Awake, however, she was sustained by the conviction that the young man *was* 'tough,' and, as one of the fittest, likely to survive—and return.

What tales he would have to tell!

Meantime, the Aunts were cherishing an ambition carefully concealed from virgin eyes. The Head of the Family had planted a vigorous seed, when he said, one day :

'You have never seen my heir?'

'We have not.'

The heir to the Mauleverer title and entailed estates was a second cousin, once removed. Unhappily he was poor, and the Aunts knew that Mauleverer had been 'nice' to him, paying for his education at Eton, and afterwards making him an allowance sufficient for a subaltern in the Rifle Brigade. Mary's money was settled upon herself and her girls, two of whom had married. Of course, if anything happened to dear Mary, Mauleverer might marry again, and beget sons, but this possibility was beyond the horizon of the ladies. Humanly speaking, a favourite phrase of Prudence's, Victor Mauleverer would succeed his kinsman, and find himself encumbered with a large



estate and houses much too big for a man without ample means. As the entail was determined in him, Victor might sell the Court and the valuable heirlooms it contained.

Mauleverer said, with his genial laugh :

'He ought to marry Rose.'

'To be sure,' said Prudence. 'I never thought of that.'

Jaqueline and she thought and talked of little else for more than a month. Rose was seventeen; Victor was four-and-twenty. The sooner the young people met, the better!

Accordingly, they did meet at the Court during Christmas week, about a year after the abrupt departure of Derek Devenish. Rose had heard from Mrs. Devenish that her son had disembarked at San Francisco, and was working upon a fruit ranch. Seemingly, work before the mast had agreed with him. He landed in the state that is called Golden in high health and spirits, and able—so he wrote—to 'whip his weight in wild cats'; nevertheless the voyage had been 'tough.'

Victor Mauleverer now challenges our attention. His 'points' were what might be looked for in a cadet of an ancient and honourable family. Mr. Wells has recently described a somewhat similar type, and labelled it 'Pinky-Dinky.' But Mr. Wells hates Pinky-Dinkies so heartily that he is not quite fair to them. Victor was useful otherwise than merely affording an object-lesson of what the young man of the future ought not to be. For instance, he could ride boldly to hounds, and shoot straight, and tell the truth—Persian virtues which Mr. Wells does not adequately take into account. As biologist, or historian, or philosopher, the heir of the Mauleverers did not shine.

Unhappily, all Pinky-Dinkies are brought up to believe that the world owes them something. Victor was modest enough in this regard. He did not demand millions.

Of horses, both to ride and drive,  
Three at the utmost ought to do;  
And, at a pinch, one might contrive  
To get along with two.

A few nice rooms—just here a book,  
And there a picture—decent wine,  
Good carpets, and a cultured cook,  
And I should not repine.

Victor, it is true, wanted a little more than this, but he

prided himself upon not being a 'grabber.' In his regiment, the other fellows were men of the same kidney, quiet in dress and manner, sticklers for 'form,' holding bounders in abhorrence, younger sons, for the most part, of country squires, with a sprinkling of nobility like the sparkle of old landed champagne, no froth, if you please, no loud popping of corks, no heavy gambling, no plunging at Kempton or Sandown Park—in fine, officers who lived up to their uniform. The latest joined subaltern was expected to be *invisibly* green. Mr. Wells will never quite come within measurable distance of understanding this particular brand of Pinky-Dinky.

Victor would have been horrified if anybody had called him a sponge, or a prig, or a snob. And yet, as will be seen, there was a tincture of all three in his attractive personality. He had sponged upon his mother, whom he adored; he was priggish when he talked of fellows in 'some line regiment'; you had a glimpse, only a glimpse, of the snob when he expressed guarded admiration of things essentially mean, although he had not been taught so to regard them, things which may be summed up in the word 'appearances.' The outside appealed to him tremendously, because he had been trained not to look below the surface. He would have stigmatised Derek Devenish as 'rather hairy at the heel,' had he chanced to overhear the conversation with Rose about maggots.

Outwardly, the Fates had been kind to him. He was a true Mauleverer, fair of skin and hair, with pleasant blue eyes which turned instinctively from what might offend them—a tall, slender, graceful figure, with the indefinable stamp of 'race' all over him.

From the cradle to the day when we meet him, he had taken for granted that certain blessings were inalienably his. And, although he would not have said so for a king's ransom, he knew himself to be superior to all such poor devils as schoolmasters, bankers, brokers, and men collectively who were constrained to struggle for recognition and fortune.

The Head of the Family had hinted genially that little Rose Brough was worth a plum, adding that it was easier to marry money than to make it. Victor nodded. It was all-important that he should find a dear little girl with a reasonable amount of her own, but there was no hurry about that—yet. He said

frankly that money alone would not tempt him. He had a holy horror of the millionairess.

Rose pleased him. For one thing, she sat her horse squarely, and, secondly, she didn't prattle or gush. Rose might 'do.'

He was not equally successful in pleasing her. She liked him, but suspended judgment. He was rather 'sidey,' so she wrote to Vere, and incapable, so far, of exhibiting enthusiasm. He refrained from 'rather nice,' but 'not bad' was too often on his lips.

The Aunts approved of him at first sight. Jaqueline said :

'He is just like the eleventh lord.'

'More Mauleverer than Mauleverer.'

Rose walked beside him out shooting. Victor pulled down a rocketeer, and remarked to his companion that he hated slaughter.

'I ask for quality, not quantity,' he observed. Then he added : 'I expect you are rather particular, too.'

'Why do you think so?'

'You're a Mauleverer.'

'I'm half Brough.'

'Your father was a wonderful man. They talk of him still in South Africa. His life ought to be written. I suppose you have lots of stuff, letters and diaries, and all that?'

'I don't know.'

'Jove! Here's a screamer coming! I must nail him when he sails over that tree.'

A cock-pheasant, thirty yards up, was neatly taken 'in the beak,' and crashed stone-dead at their feet.

'A beauty, that?'

'Yes.'

But Rose was admiring the resplendent bird, not the shot. Victor went on :

'This might be made a topping shoot.'

Rose wondered whether he was thinking of what he would do when he came into his kingdom. Would he devote himself to sport? As if in answer to her thought, he said reflectively :

'Our great-grandfather used to keep the hounds. However, it's no catch being an M.F.H. nowadays. The fellows who don't subscribe crab you behind your back, and the fellows who do, to your face. None of that for me.'

'You are very keen about hunting?'

'Two days a week, over the cream of the country. Mauleverer has sound ideas about that. The main thing is to get all you can out of life—spread your interests evenly.'

'And your profession?'

'Well, between ourselves, soldiering's not the game it was. They work us too hard. The best sort can't stick it.'

'I should have thought the best did.'

'Oh, come! You know what I'm at. By the "best" I mean the fellows with a certain position.'

'I see.'

'They chuck it after a few years.'

'But aren't you well rid of them?'

He opened his rather sleepy eyes at this.

'We'—his own regiment was indicated—'don't think so.'

Then the birds began to come in rapid succession, and Victor was busy with his loader. After this particular 'rise' the ladies returned to the house.

Next day they went hunting. As riding to hounds was a new experience to Rose, Victor offered to pilot her. Somewhere at the back of his mind simmered the idea that this would be one of several tests, so to speak, to which the possible future wife should be subjected. She ought to be able to ride 'above a bit.' He disliked your 'cut-me-down' women even more than your timid sort, who played the deuce with horses. The happy mean for him in everything. In the billiard-room, before the start, he told Mauleverer that Rose seemed to be all right, but he asked anxiously:

'Not too clever, is she?'

'Um,' grunted the Head of the Family, 'Rodney Brough's daughter ought to have brains.'

'One wants brains in a wife, but the cleverness mustn't stick out. Mary has brains, but she never makes a fool feel a fool.'

'Mary is past fifty, my boy.'

'The fact is, I'm rather taken with little Rose.'

'Good.'

'But, thank the Lord! there's no hurry. She's barely seventeen. I've a clear two years anyway.'

'That's as may be,' said Mauleverer. 'You take my tip, Victor, and capture her before the other fellows begin buzzin'

about her. Remember this, when she comes out you'll be with your regiment. Her mother, now——'

He broke off confusedly.

'You've never told me much about the mother. Bolted, didn't she, with another fellow? And died?'

'Yes.'

'And the Aunts and Rose don't know about the bolting?'

'No.'

'What were you going to say about the mother?'

'Well, we had an Under-Secretary on the string for her. He's a tremendous swell now, a Cabinet Minister. It looked a cert, because Rosetta was only just eighteen, but the other fellow, the cove she bolted with, had done the trick. The old ladies were napping.'

'I see.'

'If you do, it's all right. Young girls fall in love with the first really decent chap that comes along. You happen to be he, and my last word to you is: "Make the runnin' now!"'

They had rather a pottering day, but Rose responded to the tests imposed, and listened meekly to much excellent advice. She was no funk, and keen as mustard, without making a fuss about it. There had been a stile to negotiate—a nasty place, but Rose insisted on having it. Afterwards, she never 'bucked,' and, riding home with her pilot, paid him more than one well-deserved compliment. Victor was very much pleased with her.

'I must have a lot of talk with the little dear,' he reflected, as he dressed for dinner. 'Might tackle books, but I don't suppose she's read the new ones. Plays? Been to only three! Pictures? Not my strong point.'

Eventually, he talked about himself, not egregiously, and always with agreeable detachment. Derek had talked about himself, also, and a comparison between the two men became inevitable. Each had inherited his political opinions. When Derek declaimed against saprophytes, he was unconsciously echoing Mr. Devenish; Victor Mauleverer, the son of a Colonel in the Guards, had never heard the word.

'I might try Parliament, if a bit of luck came my way,' he remarked to Rose, in the subdued tone of a Rifleman carefully trained not to speak about himself to an audience of more than one.

'Are you expecting a bit of luck?'

'Not expecting it; but there's a great uncle of mine, a shocking pincher between ourselves, who might leave me a very nice little pile, enough to be cosy on, you understand?'

'Not quite. What do you call enough to be cosy on?'

'Anything between three and five thou. a year. I never did envy rich men. They have to do things which bore them to tears.'

'Isn't that the common lot of rich and poor?'

'You're absolutely right, *ab-solutely*! Rich and poor must consider others; your cosy fellow pleases himself.'

'Is that good for the cosy fellow, in your opinion?'

'Do you mean from the parson's point of view?'

'Not particularly. From any practical point of view.'

'Well, you know, Rose'—his tone was even more discreetly lowered—'I shan't pose before you or anybody else as—as—dash it! What is the word I'm after?'

'An altruist?'

'Right you are! Most men are selfish; and I've had to think about Number One. I had to pinch a bit at Eton. I have to go slow in the regiment. I'm not whining, but with me sixpence has to do duty for a shilling. So you see I've learnt values. I know better than any subaltern in my battalion what is worth while and what isn't.'

'You interest me so much, Victor.'

'Do I? Somehow you rather draw me out. I feel I can talk to you frankly, as—as a pal.'

'That pleases me so much. But—about the things that are worth while? Do go on.'

He went on, as before, but with a cocksureness latent beneath his modest, slightly deprecating manner.

'The fact is I can't avoid the conclusion that there's a lot of muddling. So few of us seem to know exactly where we are, and then where are we?'

'You do know where we are?'

'Why, yes, I think so. I face the fact, for instance, that I'm dependent on others. I don't like it, but there it is.'

'But—I daresay I'm asking a silly question—couldn't you be independent, if you chose?'

He stared at her, open-eyed with astonishment. Mauleverer, at the end of the table, was talking loudly to Prudence. Mary,

at her end, was listening to an anecdote. Under cover of the babble, Victor said impressively :

'I took it for granted you knew that I haven't a bob of my own. My father left just enough to my mother to keep her decently in a tiny house in Chapel Street. Mauleverer has been awfully good to me. Independent!'

'I did know what you have just told me.'

'Really? Then how could I possibly be independent?'

Rose answered guilefully : 'I see now that you couldn't be.'

'Rather not.'

'I was thinking for the moment of a man I know slightly.' (Oh, Rose!) 'He had a row with his—his people,' a faint flush came into her cheeks, 'and he left home to sink or swim, with twenty-five pounds in his pocket.'

'Was he a gentleman?'

'Yes.'

'What on earth did he do?'

'He shipped as a sailor before the mast.'

'Is that your idea of being independent?' He didn't wait for an answer, but continued, not quite so composedly : 'Your friend is *déclassé*, and when you meet him again you'll mark a change, not for the better. A fellow who was at a private school with me, and then went on to a third-rate public school, and afterwards became a civil engineer, called on my mother the other day. He ate two plates of thin bread and butter, talked at the top of his voice, contradicted my mother flatly, and ended by flinging himself back in the chair and kicking the whole tea-table sky-high. Her Crown Derby cups were smashed to smithereens.'

'What did Mrs. Mauleverer say?'

'She said that she hoped he hadn't hurt himself. Not bad—that! Now my point is that he used to be a gentleman, his people are all right, but he's the rankest of outsiders now—and independent!'

'I should like to meet him,' said Rose.

'He'd give the aunts a fit. What darlings they are, exactly right! And a type nearly extinct, the old-fashioned gentlewomen. I hope they cotton to me?'

'In their eyes, you are exactly right, too.'

'And what am I in your eyes, my clever little cousin?'

'I don't see you quite plainly yet.'

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## CHAPTER V.

## DEREK COMES BACK.

THE Vicar of Charminster had long ceased to regret being an accessory to what once he considered a fraud. Time had justified silence in regard to the passing of Rosetta, although he was humorously conscious that he might have a bad half-hour if the truth became known to his excellent wife. He was aware, also, of a soft corner in his heart for sinners who expiated sin. He divined what it had cost a loving mother to abandon her child; and in every letter since the death of Septimus that love seemed to shine out, increasing in strength and tenderness.

He was sitting in his study, upon a stormy April morning, reading the latest of these letters, which exhaled a faint perfume of orris-root reminding him that the writer, in a sense, was laid aside, shelved, with only orris-root to scent the memories of the past. The ladies at the Dower House were fond of orris-root.

'I hear' (Rosetta wrote) 'that the heir of the Mauleverers has been making love to my little Rose. Can you tell me anything about him? Lady Mauleverer says he is much liked by everybody, which to me is faint praise. Her description of him, and his resemblance to some of the portraits at the Court, make me rather uneasy. Are his blinds down? I was much amused at Rose having read "Back of Nowhere." It's not food for babes. But Rose is no longer a babe; and my earnest wish is that you will use a large discretion in the opening of the child's eyes to what lies beneath and beyond her vision. Every night she comes to me in my dreams, as if entreating the help which I could give her. I feel certain that she needs a woman such as I have become, and that the need will grow stronger every day. How good and kind you have been to her!'

The Vicar locked up the letter in a tin box. Then he answered it, in his fine scholarly handwriting.

'I have met Victor Mauleverer twice. After Christmas he paid a visit to the ladies, and drank tea here. Inheriting, as he has, the fine qualities of your family, he has not escaped their disabilities. Take it from me that the blinds will probably remain down for him, unless something quite unforeseen happens. He would make Rose a kind husband, and be dominated by her, for she has her father's strong will. He is

sleepily complacent, with an air about him of "everything is for the best, in the best of worlds." *He is unquestionably most attractive.* Particularly to women, old and young. Outwardly a gallant figure. He is likely to win Rose, although he pursues her at a walk, and she might do so much worse that I'm trying to accept him cheerfully. My wife says of him: "There's a young man who will never give his mother a moment's uneasiness." Does that help you to see him? I should add that Mrs. Easter's ideal of manhood is not on all fours with mine.'

After sealing the letter, the Vicar lay back in his chair, and mused. In fancy, he was transported to the Dower House, wafted thither by the faint fragrance of orris-root. He smiled pleasantly as he beheld the ladies, such gracious figures, more beautiful in age than in youth. Their hair had turned very white, which set off delicately tinted complexions and soft blue eyes. They were slightly deaf, and very short-sighted. Prudence had changed more than Jaqueline, for she had lost an expression of severity which at the time of Rosetta's marriage was tracing ugly lines upon her face. She still looked austere, and could deal drastically with breakers of the law, and unruly maid-servants, reigning supreme as the uncrowned queen of Charminster.

'Would the Sisters forgive Rosetta now?'

The Vicar often asked himself this question, not to be answered with satisfaction. Time and time again had he approached the ladies with some pitiful tale of sin and suffering. They would listen courteously to the clergyman of the parish—and write a small cheque, if money were needed. They refused positively to consider extenuations. Lapses of virtue, in particular, provoked a tightening of the lips and the familiar lowering of wrinkled eyelids. They subscribed to Homes for the Fallen, but had not been known to enter one.

The Vicar shook his head, and lighted an old briar pipe. He preferred the smell of tobacco to orris-root.

As he struck a match, the parlourmaid came in.

'Somebody to see you, sir—a seafaring man.'

She described the visitor with a slight toss of the head, and in a petulant tone, being exasperated because the seafaring man had come to the front door. Common sailors, carrying bundles, ought, in her opinion, to be taught their place, even if they

were young and good-looking. Moreover, this sailor had glanced indifferently at her, seemingly oblivious of the fact that she was a handsome girl.

'Show him in,' said the Vicar.

Derek Devenish entered. The maid was a newcomer, or she would have recognised him. Mrs. Easter was not successful in keeping her maids.

'Bless me!' exclaimed the Vicar.

The men shook hands, as the maid retreated with a conviction that her master did not quite know *his* place. Derek laughed. He was rather damp, and smelled of the sea. His face was a clear brown-red, and clean-shaved. His eyes sparkled furiously, for the grip of the parson had warmed him.

'How are things?' he asked. As the Vicar did not reply at once, he added: 'I came back, as I went, round the Horn. Landed this morning. Haven't been home yet; slipped up here first to make enquiries.'

'You look very well, my boy.'

'Never felt better. Mother all right?'

'Yes.'

'And father?'

'Your father has been very ill. A neglected cold turned into double pneumonia.'

'Has he—pulled through?'

'No; he is dead.'

Derek sat down, covering his face. The Vicar said nothing for at least a minute. Then, with his hand upon the bent back, he murmured gently: 'Your mother needs you.'

Derek stood up, and lifted his head. He had not seen the Vicar of Charminster since the thrashing of Mr. Devenish, and the parson was one of the few men living whose good opinion he valued highly.

'The hardness has gone out of my heart,' said Derek slowly.

'The wind and the sea drove it out long ago. I meant to ask his pardon, but I say to you, only to you, that unless he had greatly changed he is better dead.'

The Vicar inclined his head.

'When did he die?'

'Two months ago.'

Derek picked up his bundle.

'I'm off to her.'

'Come back, Derek; I'm a good listener, and you must have tales to tell.'

'Yes; I can spin a strange yarn.'

He went out a strong, vigorous man, able to fight for his own hand, the hand of a sailor before the mast. The Vicar sighed as he caught sight of the sealed letter to Rosetta. If Septimus Lovibond had returned to Charminster, penniless, carrying a bundle, but looking like Derek Devenish, how different Rosetta's life might have been!

Derek swung down the ancient High Street, and into Hog Lane. He walked as a sailor walks when just home from the sea, and he stared at the land-lubbers with a twinkling eye, the sagacious glance of the man who has seen many men and many cities.

'Rum old place,' he thought, 'but I like it better now.'

When he came to the Dower House he paused. The blinds were down as usual, the steps leading to the front door gleamed spotlessly white. The stone facings at the corners of the brick house conveyed to the young man an odd conviction of tenacity and endurance.

'Everybody is just the same,' he reflected, 'except me.'

He had never been so conscious of the enormous change in himself as now, when he stared at the Dower House and thought of what it contained.

'Will they ever let me in?' he wondered.

To the right of the front door was an object dear to the heart of Thomas Veal, a yew cunningly clipped into the shape of a ship in full sail. As a boy, Derek had thought this the most admirable presentment of a three-master. To-day he reflected that the difference between life within and without the Dower House was not wider than the difference between the ship of yew, firmly rooted in the soil, and the weather-beaten barque which he had left only that morning.

He walked on, not so jauntily, to the Devenish cottage. Every object in the landscape appealed to memories, pleasant or otherwise. He used to hide in that old holly tree from his father. Vere Easter and he found a missel-thrush's nest in the pollard just beyond it, and some addled dabchick's eggs in the middle of that bunch of rushes. Butterflies, too! He had nailed a rare fritillary near these furzes, also a sanctuary in the

hour of need. He remembered cutting an ash stick out of the copse just beyond the furzes, and his father had thrashed him soundly with it some two days later. It exasperated him to be licked with his own stick. Six of the best! Laid neatly upon his back!

And now the terror of his youth was gone for ever. Derek supposed that some fellows would feel blue about it. He couldn't. The man was dead. Let him rest in peace!

Approaching the cottage, he slackened pace. It would never do to burst in upon his mother. She must be prepared. He decided to try the back door. Ellen Fudge, good faithful soul, would be sure to be in the kitchen. When he was sent supperless to bed, old Ellen would sneak upstairs with provauant.

He knocked at the kitchen door, and Ellen opened it, screaming at sight of him.

'Whatever have you been doin' to yourself?' she asked, after the first greetings.

'Only growing,' replied Derek. 'Where's my mother?'

'In the droring-room with the Honnerable Miss Brough.'

'The Honnerable Miss Brough? Does she often come?'

'Every other day, Master Derek, since the master died. You heard o' that?'

'Yes. Now I wonder whether you could entice Miss Brough out here. I should like her to tell my mother that I've come back.'

'I might,' said Ellen Fudge, cautiously. Then, with a glance at Derek's rough clothes, she added: 'You can slip upstairs into your own room. It's ready for you. You'll find clean linen and all your things. We've a new cook in the kitchen.'

'Oh—ho! You don't want the new cook to see me in old clothes. Well, my kind dear, I shan't change yet.'

'I wasn't thinking o' the cook. Do you want the Honnerable Miss Brough to see you lookin' for all the world like a common sailor man?'

'That's what I am, Ellen. Now, hop off! I'll smoke a pipe.'

Ellen obeyed. She came back triumphant.

'I managed it nicely. Miss Brough will come out this way. Since your pore father passed away, she's taken hold here. I made bold to ask her to look at our copper saucepans to see if they needed re-lining.'

'I expect a lot of things want re-lining?'

Ellen nodded.

'I do wish, Master Derek, you'd just slip into decenter clothes—now do!'

'Not yet!'

Back of his mind was the wish that Rose should see him as he was. A good, kind Kid! He had always liked her. His heart warmed to her as ministering angel. Somehow he had never thought of her as that. He looked ruefully at his hands, stained by tarry ropes and disfigured by much use and abuse.

He had nearly finished his pipe when Rose came out.

She had changed tremendously. That was his first thought. It was no longer possible to think of her, or address her, as—Kid. Her skirts had come down; her hair had gone up. Her voice had softer and more subtle inflections. Without hesitation, she put her hand into his, saying simply:

'Thank God! you have come home.'

'You've been looking after her?'

He spoke hoarsely, moved to rare feelings. She supposed that he was thinking of his dead father, whereas the dominating thought of his mind was 'She's been kind to my mother.'

Rose said lightly:

'I wish I could have done more.'

'You're the right sort, and no mistake. Will you tell her that I'm here?'

'That will be a real pleasure, but it must be done quietly. She's not very strong.'

He looked at her with shining eyes, saying nothing, for a wonderful thing had happened. He knew, somehow, that he cared for her. 'Cared' is not quite the word, but it was the word he used to himself. He had always been attracted by the Kid, now he wanted the woman.

'God bless you!' he said with astonishing fervour, and the blush deepened in her cheeks as she turned from him.

He found his mother alone, a small woman in widow's weeds, who seemed to have shrunk. She kissed him repeatedly, and made him sit by her, holding his hand in hers, and looking at the stains and bruises. A nail had been badly torn. She kissed that, and stirred him to fresh tenderness. What wonders

women were! What angels! For a long time she asked no questions, and said little herself, breaking off with odd inarticulate cries, squeezing his strong hand. She was very white and worn, with a bewildered expression in her faded eyes. Speaking of the father, she said, interjectionally:

'At the last—just before the end—he knew he was going—and he was sorry—he said so.'

'That will be a comfort to you, dearest.'

She did not mention her husband again, but presently she whispered: 'You'll take those horrid clothes off?'

'Horrid?'

'I'm so sorry Rose saw you in them.'

'You rum little mother! Rose is all right. Tell me about her. She's been good to you—eh?'

'Yes. And, of course, I bore her. I bore everybody. I bore you, I'm sure.'

'Never! We must put a stop to this ridiculous humility. I simply won't have it. You must practise looking proud and haughty. Rose has come on, hasn't she?'

'Everybody says she's going to marry Victor Mauleverer. He's the heir.'

'Who's everybody?' asked Derek grimly.

'Mrs. Hooton—'

'That cackler!'

'The aunts have set their hearts on it. I hear he's such a nice young fellow.'

'Nice, is he? That's encouraging.'

'Yes; isn't it? Rose admitted that he was nice.'

'Good.'

'And her fortune will make it possible for them to live at the Court.'

'You have it cut and dried, I see. Now—I'm off to make myself look "nice," too.'

He kissed her, and went out of the small room, humming a ditty of the sea. Mrs. Devenish closed her tired eyes, and a faint smile broke upon her face. Her boy had come home.

*(To be continued.)*



*MEMORIES OF THE TENNYSONS AT  
SOMERSBY.<sup>1</sup>*

THOUGH Tennyson seldom visited Lincolnshire after he left it in 1837, he never forgot it. Lincolnshire sight and scene constantly recur through his poems, but his love for Lincolnshire was a human love. He had been happy in his friendships and was ever true to them. Thus, writing to my grandmother in 1838, he says he was very sorry to have missed the sight of my father, for if he had known he was going to London he would have stayed at home and 'been cheered with the sight of a Lincolnshire face.' 'For,' he adds, 'I must say of Lincolnshire as Cowper said of England, "With all thy faults, I love thee still."' Again, in a letter to my grandfather in 1845, about the pension that Peel had just granted him, he says, 'Truly my love for my friends must not be measured by the quantity of black and white into which I put it: for, however appearances are against me, I *have* a love for old Lincolnshire faces, and things, which will stick by me as long as I live.'

This love of Lincolnshire had been born of the friendship of such families as the Edens, Barings, Rawnsleys, Mundys, and Coltmans, Massingberds, Langtons, Booths, Wrights, Walls's, Alingtons, Brackenburys, Swans, Cracrofts, Sellwoods, Cheales's, and Maddisons hereabout, for the houses in this neighbourhood then made a great family party. It was fortunate for Tennyson that in some of these families there were girls, more or less of the poet's own age, growing up in simplest beauty and naturalness, who, with his own sisters, made it possible for Tennyson throughout his life to have the noblest and most chivalrous idea of English womanhood.

Years before he met that 'Oread or Dryad' in her grey dress in yonder Holywell Wood, who became a star to him for the next restless twenty years, and such 'peace of God' to him on her marriage day as blessed him for the rest of his life, there were many stars amongst the girls in this neighbourhood in whose light and loveliness he rejoiced.

What he felt for some of these he has left on record in tender

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at Somersby on the occasion of the Tennyson Centenary Memorial Meeting, August 7, 1911.

verse. The originals of 'Rare pale Margaret' and 'Adeline,' were the Misses Bourne, beauties in their day, who lived at Alford, but came to stay for long visits at Dalby and were often over at Somersby. The two friends, Rosa Baring, of whom he wrote the sonnet beginning

Sole rose of beauty, loveliness complete,

and the Sophy Rawnsley whom he addressed in the sonnet

To thee with whom my best affections dwell,

have told me the impression that the poet made upon them in their girlhood.

Rosa Baring, 'Queen of the rosebud garden of girls,' although to her all poetry in those days seemed mere 'jangledom,' remembered how she would hang upon the words of the quaint, shy, long-haired young man who impressed her as being more learned and thoughtful than was common, and wiser than his years. 'Alfred,' she said, 'was so quaint and chivalrous, such a real knight amongst men, at least I always fancied so; and though Sophy and I used to ride over to Somersby just to have the pleasure of pleasing him or teasing him as the case might be, and used to joke one another about his quaint taciturn ways, which were mingled strangely with boisterous fits of fun, we were as proud as peacocks to be worthy of notice by him, and treasured any message he might send, or any word of admiration he might let fall.'

As for my Aunt Sophy, the original of 'Airy fairy Lilian,' as the family tradition has it, she never quite got over the kind of awe with which Tennyson inspired her as a young man, but she said 'he was so interesting because he was so unlike other young men, and his unconventionality of manner and dress had a charm which made him more acceptable than the dapper young gentlemen of ordinary type at ball or supper-party. He was a splendid dancer, for he loved music and kept such time. But you know,' she would add, 'we liked to talk better than dance together at Horncastle, Spilsby, or Halton, for he always had something worth saying, and said it so quaintly. Most girls were frightened of him. I was never afraid of the man, but of his mind.'

That Tennyson was fond of dancing in those days I learned from a letter to my grandfather, who evidently had just written

him an account of the Horncastle ball. 'I am glad to hear of your quadrilling at Horncastle. There is something pleasant in the notion of your figuring in L'Été with all your hood fluttering about you.' He once told my brother that at the age of sixty he had well-nigh danced a girl off her feet and was not a bit dizzy at the end of it.

Another friend who met Tennyson in Lincolnshire as a young man was deeply impressed with him. 'He looked you through and through, and made you feel that he was taking stock of you from head to toe.' I believe it was the absolute naturalness of the man, his unconventional way of asking direct questions as well as his eagle eye, that impressed her.

My mother's recollection of her first meeting him was that she had just the same sense of awe. She had gone with her uncle, Sir John Franklin, to dine with the Sellwoods at Horncastle in 1836 to meet Charles Tennyson, who had married her cousin, Miss Louisa Sellwood. 'I shall never forget,' she wrote, 'my first impressions. The door opened, and in came two tall, broad-chested men, one lighter-haired than the other, but both with hair longer than was usual, quite out of the common in appearance—men whom you would speak of as more than *distinguished*, I should say *noble* in appearance. One was Frederick, the other Alfred Tennyson; with them entered the most beautiful woman I thought I had ever seen; this was Mary, their sister. Alfred Tennyson was told off to take me down to dinner, and I remember well to this day the kind of awe of the man that came over me as we entered the dining-room. My awe was not lessened when I saw him put up his eye-glasses and look me through and through.' My mother was a good pianist. She told me: 'The thing I best remember is that when the gentlemen came to the drawing-room and I was set down to play, Alfred Tennyson at once left off talking, came up close to the piano and sat watching, and said, as my fingers moved over the keys, "The sparkle in the rings of Zobeide." The awe of him quite unnerved me and I expect I played but ill.'

Nearer fifty than forty years ago, as an inquisitive lad, I used to talk about the poet's father with my grandfather's old coachman, a Waterloo veteran, who, like all the servants of that time hereabout, was a personal friend of the family and knew all the goings-on in the various homes. He would tell me of the way in which the poet's father, 'the old doctor,' as he was called, would

drive over to dinner with my grandfather and after dinner fall to talking politics; he was a Whig and my grandfather a Conservative. The talk not infrequently ended in a ring of the bell, and in a demand for Dr. Tennyson's coach, when he would go off in a towering passion, and send his servant the next morning with an ample apology and the request that my grandfather would dine with him next day.

There are interesting letters preserved between the houses which show how constant this interchange of dinners was. They are full of fun and brusquerie.

It was not till many years later, nearer thirty than fifty years ago, that I made local inquiry here in Somersby of reminiscences of the poet's family that still lingered on within 'the circle of the hills.' Everybody remembered 'th' owd doctor,' who was 'the greatest scholard hereabout, the clivverist man i' these parts; a great tall man with a foot thirteen inches long, quite a furrin-looking gentleman, brown i' the eyes, brown i' the head, and brown i' the skin; fond o' tobacco, and as for his sermons i' chuch they were ower good and ower short. But a kindly man wi'owt a bit o' pride in him, and though th' owd doctor mud be high-larnt, he wud nivver hurt a hair of any man's head. But he was all for study, and maäde the boys stay in a deal mornin's and night.' Untidy in his dress, in fact quite a 'slumpt un,' as they call it, 'he was his own harchitect, and the carver of the Hadams and Heves as is set up outside above the windows of the dining-room out o' the sandstone from the quarry, and did a 'maäzin' sight o' work at the chimley-piece, and th' owd door an' all. He was a real clivver owd chap as a harchitect, mind you, was th' owd doctor, tho' it was his man Horlins as was fond of bricks and kep' him at it.'

From another Somersby villager I learned that he had a voice like a 'horgin,' and was 'the clivverest man i' the county. A great scholard as taught all his boys hissen; would not let other folks do it—taught them hissen, he did.'

'He was in his prime when he died,' I said.

'Yees, yees,' said my friend, 'but though he never looked owd, he never looked young. Theer was a great family of them to wear him; one died a babby and there was eleven left,' and the old man went over the names of them all, and then added, 'It was study as wore out th' owd doctor. He wouldn't 'low other fwoaks to school his bairns.'

As for Mrs. Tennyson, the memory of her that lingered on in the parish was that she was 'a lowish little laädy wi' a pleasantish faäce. She enjoyed bad health, poor thing, and was often in a cheer, and hed a great dog with hooves like a donkey amoast, that would draw the cheer at times. Eh dear! I've seen that critter laäy hissen i' the middle of the road, you know, on a hot daäy, and nowt would stir it till it hed a mind. But the boys and gells were amoast allus wi' her, particular fond of their ma, I suppose. I was nobbut a boy i' them daays, but I know she was a kind laädy to all the poor as wanted for owt. She was the gentlest laädy we ever clapped eyes on.'

Beloved by her own children and by all the village children also, the villagers had a general idea that, while the old doctor was feared by them, 'for he did the schooling and gave them a deal of it, and was 'maäzin' particular about lessons, mind ye,' the mother was best teacher after all, for she 'ud take 'em out when she went with the cheer, and read to them, and talk to them, and they loved her and wud ha' done owt for her, and she was proud of them, stock and lock, was Mrs. Tennyson; and like enew, for she seed it was in 'em; yees, she seed it was in 'em, she did.'

The old fellow that told me this did not know how entirely the invalid mother's tender companionship, as fountain-head and inspirer of their work, had been corroborated on another occasion by one of her sons. 'We always,' said Charles Tennyson Turner to me at Grasby, when he was showing me the portrait of his mother, 'we always as boys turned to her for encouragement. We had the greatest reverence for my father's learning, but he never let us know what he thought of our poetry. He used to tell us to mind our books, for we could not get bread by such stuff; but my mother delighted in our work, and when we went out for our walks with her read to us her favourite poems from Thomson's "Seasons" and Beattie's "Calendar," and I think I can see her now waiting with us on the road for the carrier from Louth to come over the Tetford Hill, bringing the proofs of our first book of poems for correction.'

As for the Tennyson boys and girls, I found it a current tradition in the village that they had grown up a fine, handsome set. 'Such fine, up-straight men they all were; such heads of hair, and such a walk, without never a hounce of pride in them; always in and out of the cottages, and never forgot their servants,

and generally with books in their hands.' One old parishioner said that she 'allus noticed that the children were round about Mrs. Tennyson like bees. They were well-beloved hereabout,' she added, 'the gells almost as clivver and high-larnt as the boys, I suppose, but nothing wi' theer hands, you know—niver could sampler, nor knit, nor sew, nor nowt, leastways Ann, the nursemaid, used to say so; but they was all for theer mother.'

One old man who was born the same year as 'Halfred,' as he called him, said, 'I suppose he's a great man now, a lord, and what not, and does a deal o' work for the Queen, I suppose. Well, it was not no moor than I put down for them, for all the boys had noations. But, poor things,' he added, 'they would hev books allus i' theer hands as they went along. The boys was all for study; why blaamed if they didn't mek a book and git eight pund for it, the four on 'em together, when they was nobbut lads. They was bound to git on, you knoa. They was all for books, I tell you, and so was th' owd doctor, and he larned them all hissen.'

I asked if the boys were fond of fishing, or nesting, or hunting, and my informant said that he did not think they ever followed hunting; that at times he had gone nesting with them in Halliwell and New England, 'but they was a deal fonder o' fishin' then owt else, nobbut study. Eh dear! I can see 'em now down i' yon midder by the beck.'

Another old fellow said to me, 'You see we wur boys together, and boys remembers boys, specially them, for there was no pride nor nowt about 'em, and for all they wur th' owd doctor's sons, and he was high-larnt, they was quite conversible wi' poor fwoak, you know, quite plaäin i' theer dress an' aw, both boys and gells—no crinolins nor fanciculs nor nowt; and as for th' owd doctor, he was quite a slumpt un. Eh dear! he was fond of his 'bacca. Theer was a little shop theer, just hoaver the road, see tha', and he would many a time call and git a bit of 'bacca theer. It helped him in his studies, you know.'

'And what was he like?'

Oh, he was a fine, tall gentleman, and so was the boys—all tall and dark, quite furriners, you know.'

Most of my informants spoke of the way in which 'the Tennysons were very partial to Halliwell'—Halliwell, the fairy wood, where in those days there was a school-house and a skittle-alley close by the well, and a bath-house 'with steps down to the

watter, and fwoaks in carriages came from far and near to drink it.' But they all agreed that everything had changed now in Halliwell Wood except the snowdrops, 'and they coomes oop reg'lar, a sight on 'em i' Halliwell.'

One old fellow, a road-surveyor, then in his eighty-third year, was proud to remember that in the holidays he had gone up to the manor house to teach them 'summer' lessons. His memory of them was that the eldest, Frederick, then at college, was rather proud and silent, but Mr. Charles, afterwards Charles Tennyson Turner, was the pleasantest to deal with, and that Mr. Alfred was pretty easily instructed and 'larned' fast. He remembered how the boys were always scribbling about on bits of paper when he was giving them their lessons, and how the doctor would be instructing them in some language he could not understand, and was 'maäzin' sharp with them, mind you, was the owd doctor.'

This geniality of Charles had also been remembered by an old woman who, though eighty-two, remembered as though it were yesterday the day when, as a girl of eleven, she went to her first place 'along o' the Tennysons.' She spoke of Mr. Arthur as 'a poor creature,' meaning a delicate boy; of Mr. Charles as 'straängen nisht to do with; but as for Mr. Halfred, he was a 'dacious one. He used to be walking up and down the carriage-drive hundreds of times a day, shouting and holloaing and preaching, with a book always in his hand; and such a lad for making sad work of his clothes. He never seemed to care how he was dressed or what he had on—"down on his heels," and "his coat unlaced and his hair anyhow." He was a rough 'un was Mister Halfred, and no mistake,' and she laughed heartily as the picture of the lad came back to memory. But she remembered also how fond 'Mr. Halfred' was of going to see the poor people, and how he would often read to them, from cottage to cottage.

These old village people must have learned a good deal of Alfred Tennyson's mind at this time. Amongst them they remembered there was a Wesleyan minister who 'Mr. Halfred used to have a deal o' talk with i' them daäys, and he said he wud go to chuch to 'commodate his mother, but he wud well have liked to get oop a meetin' hissen.'

I learned afterwards that in the interregnum following the death of Dr. Tennyson there had been a curate-in-charge who



had 'got along of the farmers, and they had played sad wuk wi' him,' so I could understand 'Mr. Halfred's' impatience of church-going. The old parish sexton, as he told me of this, added, 'He was quite a religious young man was Mr. Halfred, you know; leastways, would have been if he had been dragged up by the Wesleyans, you know.'

I came away from Somersby with the feeling that it was very fortunate that such a family as the Tennysons had been brought up in these simple and sincere village surroundings. Their wit, home-bred, home-educated, had much impressed the parish, but what had impressed it more was the sense of their entire friendliness and love of the people. Unconventional in dress and manners, unlike the blond-faced village people hereabouts, noble of bearing and beautiful of countenance as they were, remarkable of voice and manner, they left an indelible impression of their personalities upon the neighbourhood.

Not only here at Somersby was Mr. Alfred remembered, but away down at Gibraltar Point, on the Lincolnshire coast, I found that his name was a household word. Entering one day the only farmhouse seen for miles, near Gibraltar Point, and falling to talk with its old inhabitant, who was just getting in his crop of pears, with which the earwigs had made sad havoc, the following conversation had ensued: 'Straängely constituted things them battle-twigs is, as God Omighty knaws; be dalled, if they hev'n't gone with the best of my pears to year, and pears is as hard as owt. I nivver seed nobbut one as could manash them pears, as th'owd battle-twigs has manashed them, for sartin sewerness, and that was young Mr. Alfred when he was a boy.'

'What young Mr. Alfred was that?' I asked.

'Why, Mr. Alfred; you know Mr. Alfred. Ivvery one in them daäys knew Mr. Alfred hereabout, howivver. You've heard tell of Mr. Alfred Tennyson, the owd doctor's son, straänge friend of owd Mr. Rowsley, as built the house at Skegsnest?' The old fellow was wrong as to the builder, but I assented, and he continued: 'He was straängen fond o' the jam as well as the pears, was Mr. Alfred. My missus 'ud saäy, "Now, here's Mr. Alfred a-cooming: we must git the jam ready"; and she would open the door and let cat out, for he was a regular boy for the cats, was Mr. Alfred. I remember our cat, poor thing, went up smoke-hole one time when he coomed in at the door, and Mr. Alfred said, "Your cat is so shan, Mrs. G.—," and like enough.

poor thing. Not that he meant owt, but cats is sensible things, and they know who's who, mind ye. We haven't heard tell of him for years, but he grew up a straängen great man, I sup-poäse, and addles his bread by his writings; is worth some hundreds, they do saäy.'

'Yes,' I said; 'I should think you might almost say he is worth some thousands, and not hundreds. He is the greatest poet of the land, and the Queen wishes to make him a grand lord for his work as a poet.'

I shall not soon forget the astonishment that came into the old man's face as, hobbling to the back-kitchen door, he said, 'Missus, do you hear what this young gentleman is saäying about Mr. Alfred? He saäys he's wuth thousands by his potry!'

'Naäy, naäy, sir, you mun be mista'en; sewerly it's hundreds, not thousands. Well, I nivver! Why, you know, i' them daäys we thowt he wur daft. He was allus ramblin' off quite by hissen, wi'out a coat to his back and wi'out a hat to his head, nor nowt.

'I remember as if it wur nobbut yisterday, my man, as was a fiddler bit of a fellow, was off to Hildred's theer at Skegsnest, to play fur quolity at a dance; and he was cooming hoam in the morning early; and, be dashed, who should he light on but Mr. Alfred, a-raävin' and taävin' upon the sand-hills in his shirt-sleeves an' all; and Mr. Alfred said, saäys he, "Good morning," saäys he; and my man saäys, "Thou poor fool, thou doesn't knaw morning from night"; for you know, sir, i' them daäys we all thowt he was craäzed. Well, well! And the Queen wants to maäke him a lord, poor thing! Well, I nivver did hear the likes o' that, for sarten seweriness.'

It was probably not at Gibraltar Point only that Tennyson was thought to be 'craäzed, poor thing, i' them daäys'; nor did he as a boy only 'raäve and taäve' about the sand-hills at Skegness. Eight miles to the north lay Mablethorpe, and thither, as Charles Tennyson, the elder brother, once told me, did he and Alfred repair on the day that their first volume of 'Poems by Two Brothers' appeared in print, to celebrate the fact with boy-like joyousness.

'We hired a conveyance,' said Tennyson Turner, 'and drove off for the day, and shouted ourselves hoarse on the shore as we rolled out poem by poem in one another's ears. I think if any-

one had met us they would have thought us out of our minds, and in a way I think that day we were indeed beside ourselves for joy.'

Skegness—the Skegness of the poet's boyhood—is quite changed, but Somersby is Somersby still. We who come together to-day in memory of the great poet, of whom as Lincolnshire men we are so justly proud, are grateful not alone to that 'old doctor' who made such scholars of his boys, and to that tenderest of mothers who encouraged them in their poetic work, but are thankful to all the simple poor whose doors were open to the family, even as the hearts of the young Tennysons were open to the poor, and who taught Alfred Tennyson not only sympathy with humble life, but taught him also that grand Doric of which he once said to me, 'Some of the best things I have written are those Lincolnshire sketches, "The Northern Farmer" and the rest, though'—added the poet—'it needs humour to understand them.'

That dear old Lincolnshire dialect he loved to talk and hear talked to the end.

H. D. RAWNSLEY.

### FAREWELL TO THE LAND.

It is Christmas Eve in London, and, outside the window, traffic grinds through black slush. This morning, as I walked through Kensington Gardens, not a sign of growth was to be seen save for two forlorn little shrubs, judas-trees of a sort, which put out shamefacedly a bespattered frill of white blossom. Yet, six weeks ago, in the garden that I have said good-bye to, daffodil spikes were already shot three inches high, preparing for the spring; and the last flowers I gathered in it were a basketful of roses, sweet-pea, and mignonette—not radiant summer blossoms assuredly, but still beautiful, still fragrant, even in November. And were I there to-day, now in the very deadness of the year, I could find a nosegay out of doors—violets, of course, but also bits of wallflower,—periwinkle too, and certainly the garden primroses, pink, yellow, and crimson, that bloom all through the cold months in that sunny corner. People may talk as they will of Ireland's rainy weather; I know of no place in these islands where December and January give more hours of sun and clear soft air than in the tract of coast which stretches north and south of Dublin from Wicklow to the Boyne. The plain of Fingal, lying north of the city along the sea, is as good a place to garden in as man could discover; and consequently it is scattered over with old walled-in spaces that have been gardens for many generations, but never more skilfully tended than to-day. Our neighbours shamed us with their connoisseurship, their choice blooms, their artfully combined effects. Only one distinction was peculiar to our garden, and we deserved no credit for it—the quaint arrangement of an oval wall, into which the house was set, so that the long curves of mellow brickwork enclosing that acre of sunny southward-sloping ground sprang from either hand as you looked out of window.

My mind goes back on it all with a very sharp regret; it can recall the place of every plant, it thinks of the changes made, and to the day of my death I shall be sorry not to have watched the growth of a mulberry and a tulip-tree that I planted in the plot where a huge old monkey-puzzle was bleeding itself to death in a thick flow of resinous sap. But, after all, it was

not the garden—not, at least, the flower-garden—that I found it hard to say good-bye to. It was the surroundings; it was the whole way of life. That November day when I took my farewell bouquet with me into Dublin was a day of soft sun, flying clouds, and shining sea; and as the tram carried me city-wards, running along the lagoon which separates Dollymount sandhills from the shore, I watched for the thousandth time the graceful shapes and swift movement of the running shorebirds and waders, redshank, oyster-catcher, sea-snipe, and curlew. Their flight, their attitudes, were a perpetual interest along those great expanses of cockle-breeding shore, over which lay in tracts a film of green weed, most beautiful in the evening light—more beautiful even than was the water itself when it covered all with its pale sheet of blue. Linnets haunted that shore, too, in droves, coming to feed on the red weed; and I have watched bird-trappers at work with their snap-nets in the marshy fields when the poor song-birds came to drink the fresh water after their salt feedings.

Near as we were to a great city, there was a great variety of bird-life: duck of all sorts, especially sheldrake—sometimes a dozen of the great handsome creatures, easy to approach, since the fowlers let them alone; and I have seen geese passing. In the fields about the house, boys could spend long hours stalking curlew and green plover, with a chance now and then of flushing snipe, or even woodcock, out of the ditches in time of frost. All the smaller birds were abundant: black-birds and thrushes so many that I had to beg old herring-nets from friends in Donegal and Galway to save the fruit; and then our life was embittered by finding the creatures tangled in the meshes—screaming and biting when one came to let them go. Bullfinches used to come often, and I have seen both the gold-crested and the fire-crested wren, attracted by a long range of conifers. In the little stream at the bottom of the garden a moorhen built, and more than once I have seen a kingfisher flash by. For some reason the cuckoo never came our way; but cornerakes we heard too much, and I have had a better look at them there than ever anywhere else—queer, ungainly objects in the open, shamefaced till they could make their way into the grass, diving snake-wise for cover.

Before people took to shooting them, the curlew used to be up constantly through winter on the big lawn, stalking

solemnly, and then with equal solemnity driving their great scimitar beaks into the sod. But the loveliest of all bird-visions that I saw there used to be in summer evenings when half the lawn was deep in hay, and the moths were out over it. For then suddenly the twilight would be filled with white wings a-flutter and a-poise, dipping, swooping, checking, as the little black-head gulls hawked for the rising insects. They came in fifties and in hundreds, and over the long, swaying stretch of green—flecked itself with pale blossom—their white flutterings wove an amazing web of beauty.

Yet, 'it is not beauty I demand,' not beauty only that I miss, that I sigh for since I drifted back into the ranks of the town-dwellers: it is the control and ownership of land, the care of its growing produce. In the garden I am sure my greatest pleasure came from the apple-trees: not only because the apple seems to me among fruits what the herring is among the fishes—the cheapest, the most accessible, and the best of all, but because the apple-gathering was a kind of harvest, an operation of some thought and care. My last days in the place were charmed and embittered by it. There was the keen pleasure, as always, of handling the fruit, stretching this way and that from the ladder, delightfully occupied for hours in the sweet, clean air; and there was also the keen stab of knowledge that very probably in my lifetime I should never again be the master of apple-trees. That sense of ownership, of a personal tie, is very strong, though very absurd: for what was I to the trees? I had not planted them, nor pruned them; yet it seemed to me, gathering the green globes that held there so handsome on the long branches, they would never have swelled so happily and prosperously save in a kind of response to care. This last was a bad apple-season with us, as with everyone, and eating-apples were far to seek; but the big kitchen sorts were a crop to brag of, so even were they in their perfection. My latest gathering was of a few that had been left on the highest boughs; there were nine apples, and they weighed over seven pounds—filling me with a pride of achievement such as I have long ceased to take, for instance, in any output of my pen.

But much stronger was my interest in the tiny farm—just what we call nowadays an economic holding, big enough to support a man and his family: some ten Irish acres, but of very good land. It is better land to-day than when we took it over;

and odd it is for me to think how reluctantly I was forced into a responsibility which became the most delightful occupation of my middle age. Farming never attracted me as a boy, although there was a farm attached to the country rectory where I was bred; and my first instinct when I got control of fields was to sub-let them to a dairyman. But soon it became apparent that the need to respect his growing grass was a nuisance, and the big mobs of cattle, which he put on for a fortnight at a time to eat all bare, were a worse nuisance when pasture began to fail them; so I consented to keep cows. The two men whom we employed had, of course, that passion for dabbling in cattle which is bred in every Irish countryman, and they succeeded in implanting it even in me.

What there should be so fascinating in watching over the growth of beasts I cannot rightly imagine—especially where one is dealing only with the commonest sort of cattle, with no pretensions to show-qualities. The only test of success lay in final prices: and there the battle was generally fought, as the moment to risk our fortunes was also decided, by my men, not by me. Still, the pleasure of daily inspection grew to be mine—most leisurely of pleasures—and towards the end of my experiences I was sometimes dragged into the fray of bargaining, and began to taste its feverish joy. Perhaps it was only a species of vanity, since I never felt myself so plainly risen in good men's esteem as on a day when I succeeded in securing some twenty shillings more than the limit which was indicated as probable. These were the events—the great moments. But, after all, what really made the occupation was planning out the partition into meadow and pasture, selling at such times as to deal profitably with one's store of hay, experimenting with fertilisers, and so forth.

It was of no mean interest to observe how very conservative is the farming type if left to its own devices. My head-worker was not only a skilled gardener, but a man of first-rate general intelligence: yet on a farm his tendency was to do all as he had seen it done from boyhood. Where his training told was in prompt recognition of facts. He was very sceptical about artificial grass-manures till he had tried one; but when the result came, against his prophecies, he was quick to show me how its benefit extended even into a second year. He scouted the idea of a one-horse plough till it was forced on him; but after a year's use of it on the acre that we kept in tillage, he told me that it



had nearly saved its total cost. Still, every innovation was a fight, and because I happened always to be away from home when potatoes had to be planted, planted they always were in the old-fashioned way, from cut sections, not sprouted, and often from inferior seed. Nor could I persuade him to spray the plants, as is done to-day in Ireland everywhere that the potato-crop is a man's main dependence. I was referred to the example of our neighbours—first-rate farmers, too, in all but their neglect of this precaution. We got our lesson, though we did not get time to profit by it, when the wet summer of 1910 left us with blackened stalks before July was half over. One of my last experiences was the farmer's sense of personal disgrace when I went to help the men dig out a few early drills, and found every second potato an ugly rotten mass. I remembered how the year before, as we worked side by side there in the crumbling earth, my gardener had broken silence with one of his rare expressions of pleasure: 'Any man would be pleased digging spuds like them,' he said, as he opened up perhaps the twentieth root in succession, with its full complement of clean, even-sized, shapely tubers.

I am sorry we ended with a failure. But nevertheless we sold the produce of that acre (over and above the potatoes which kept our household going till November) for fifteen pounds, and we sold to a farmer who bought most of the crop in the ground. At any rate, my few years' experience made living and real to me the belief that land tilled is more profitable than land left to grow grass at its own sweet will; and that is a fundamental proposition which, I think, every legislator in these countries ought to be forced to verify, or confute, for himself.

Another discipline that I would put into that school for politicians which exists in my Utopia is the experience of manual labour. Gentlemen talk airily about an eight hours' or a ten hours' day; but do they know what it means? I have heard able editors declaring that they themselves wished greatly they could get off with an eight hours' shift: I have even heard members of Parliament declaring that their Parliamentary labours (save the mark) are often extended beyond that limit—as if that had something to do with the matter! It would really be a great and blessed thing if every educated man knew by bodily experience what it meant to dig eight hours and get half a crown for it.

The learner would have to be taken early. No man of middle age could, I think, do a reasonable day's spade-work without going near to kill himself, unless he had been broken to it in boyhood. But even a couple of hours, or, better still, the task which an ordinary labourer will accomplish in two hours, would teach a man what labour means, and should, if he is a decent man, teach him to feel that sense of inferiority which the swimmer inspires among those who must drown if they fall in. Yet, like all the valuable moral lessons which life brings, this one is only acquired incidentally. Shooting and fishing develop the knack of observation, but would scarcely do so in a man who shot or fished, so to say, in cold blood, with an ulterior motive. The admirable effects of working beside working men are likelier to come if you do not go to seek for them.

Perhaps I am wrong: zest in the thing done need not be necessary to learning by the doing of it. But this much I know—that by owning a farm, by having a voice in the working of it, by putting my hand to all the elementary activities, I did find myself brought nearer to the central facts of life, and nearer to the men I employed. Comradeship was established. Also, I put my hand to the tasks because they tempted me, just like sailing a boat, managing a horse, or any of the other things that men normally do for sport; and I found, if not sport in them, at least pleasure. It was not indeed that drunkenness of happy physical exertion which Tolstoi has described in a famous chapter; that can come only to the young and the very strong, and then scarcely except in the harvest, which is a kind of carnival of the year. But still, there was a pleasure of bodily exertion which entirely relaxed and rested the mind, and seemed to bring an added self-respect, as one learnt mastery over some of those ordinary businesses of early civilised man which have dropped out of our too complex development.

It was curious, too, to observe how partial is that training of the body through the routine of games which most of us undergo. Such muscles as are needed to swing an axe I found tolerably sufficient—but perhaps only because I had learnt the knack as a boy. I could work a cross-cut saw as long as my men, but to sever a branch the thickness of my leg with a hand-saw would fatigue me horribly. A pick was, like an axe, no trouble to use; but one soon found that the jar brought on a deadly nerve-tiredness, hard to get rid of. But where absolute

inferiority showed itself was in all the work that taxed spine and loins—digging or shovelling. And it is not simply physical strength that the novice lacks: what distinguishes the good worker is the swing or rhythm by which he always saves himself the dead lift. Nothing looks simpler than shovelling gravel into a cart, but if you try along with a workman you will find the difference in results, and (if you are observant) will perceive and correct the difference of method. More skilled forms of labour, such as building a hayrick, no amateur can hope to acquire; even pitching hay off a cart is most baffling to a beginner. But I honestly pride myself in the belief that, working for three or four hours at a stretch, I was worth, say, threepence an hour; and it saddens me beyond words to reflect that this gift is now locked up useless and perishing.

Still, something has entered into me which was not there before. I am free of certain communions not accessible to the uninitiated: I have realised the pleasure which a labourer experiences in seeing a good crop and in harvesting it, and the added and different pleasure of feeling that the crop you harvest is your own. Whether a town-bred man, coming to that life in middle age as I did, would learn what I learnt is a question: the education in all country lore must begin early, though a countryman can make himself a very sufficient Londoner in ten or a dozen years. How to set out if you lack all such country knowledge as one cannot remember learning—if, for instance, you cannot distinguish the various trees? Yet it is only of late that I learnt something of the grain of woods, how thorn is the best for burning, how a poplar log clogs the saw but will split for a mere impulse of the axe, and so on.—And in learning these things, I learnt above all to respect the inherited knowledge of a countryside, the wisdom of a good outdoor labourer. My man could readily and effectually put his hand to painting and glazing; when we needed to build a small room he knew how to shape a slate, how to roughcast a wall, just as naturally as he knew how to set a saw or sharpen a scythe. In our intercourse I began to realise what a training is the countryman's life. 'Sure any man that had hands on him could do that,' was a phrase that I heard many a time when we discussed this or that job a little off the regular lines—fixing wire fences, laying a pipe to carry water-supply to the field where our cattle were, and

the like. And I saw, too, how out of this general resourcefulness there grows a natural quick adaptability.

An old water-ram supplied the garden, and it was out of gear when we came; it never was really in order, yet year in and year out this gardener kept it going by constant tinkering at the tricky machinery, and at the control of the sluices. On the land you learn to do things for yourself, and not be calling in the specialist. Add to this a general knowledge of rough leechcraft for beasts, partly traditional, partly acquired, like all the working man's knowledge, by watching the skilled man and noting his methods in a memory which has never been spoilt by a dependence on the written word: in that way you get some notion of the country-bred type—which in England is perishing from among you.

Once I was struck with the limitation which habits of depending on machinery had bred even in countrymen. To work our little rotation, we grew now and then small strips of oats, no larger than what you see in Connemara, and we had missed our chance of catching the threshing-machine which travelled round the farms of that neighbourhood. I came home, found rats devouring the unthreshed corn, and wrote to the county of my own upbringing for a couple of flails. Not one of the three hands whom I then had could handle the flails properly—to the huge contempt of a strapping lass who came from where the flails did, and who set to work with a will for the men's instruction. I thanked my stars that I had learnt that particular trick long years ago in those far-off hills of Donegal, and so escaped her frank derision.

One thing more. Living on the land gave me full confidence (not that I ever lacked it) not merely to deny, but to ridicule and spit upon an opinion which often enough is put forward. A 'gentleman' (to speak by the card), it is said, lowers himself in the eyes of working people if he puts his hand to servile labour. God help us all, if that were so! For my own part, though it had become natural for my men to send for me without more ado when an extra hand was needed in any sudden pressure, and to save up things which needed extra help till I should be available, no one ever got more ungrudging service or better value for wages paid; and I think I got more than service, as certainly I gave more than wages. I think our liking and

respect were mutual. If to-day we breed 'class conscious Socialists,' perhaps that is because yearly fewer of us, gentle and simple, live together on the land.

Old-fashioned cotton-spinners and millowners used to insist that their sons should put in their period of apprenticeship, working beside the hands; and it seems that this practice is dropping into disuse. If so, the separateness of class life is being increased here also. When gentlemen farmed their own land, there was a natural give-and-take between employer and employed which developed the human bond far more than it emphasised the class distinction. To-day I think the great institution of perfected pastimes (so unlike the old village cricket-match) is taking the place of those pleasures which generations before us found in overseeing men, beasts, and crops. And, pathetically enough, those who seem most anxious to develop the peasant life anew, the votaries of small holdings, are town-bred men. In English politics, the Radical party, more especially in the younger generation, seems to be that group which has lost touch most completely with the land. Mr. Walter Long (my ideal of an English politician, if it were not for his opinions), and on the other side Sir Edward Grey, are almost the only statesmen who strike me, not merely as lacking the town-bred compassion for the yokel, but as possessing the countryman's far more deeply seated contempt for the ignorance of townsfolk. Such men alone are fitted to understand and to help the field labourer, who is, to my thinking, of all labourers the least mechanically minded, and, under favourable conditions, the best-educated man.

However, this is no place to talk politics. What I find, analysing my own consciousness and setting down the result, for students of such things, is that five years' living upon the land, in charge of land, leaves me altered, and, I hope, enriched. And it is with a sense of incompleteness, as though I lacked henceforward something natural to man's proper development, and to a reasonable life, that I have said, for a period anyhow, farewell to the land.

STEPHEN GWYNN.

# *MYSIE HAD A LITTLE LAMB.*

BY JANE H. FINDLATER.

Mysie's had been a dull day: storm outside, and Mother with a big baking on hand, a little cross when the child wanted to 'turn the scones' on the girdle by way of amusing herself.

Mysie was only six years old and could not reach high enough to see whether the scones were burning or not, so perhaps it was just that she should be refused the job; but she felt aggrieved none the less. She wandered across to the window, and gazed out through the small panes at the hillside and the brooding grey-white sky above it. A vast frown seemed to have gathered over the face of the world—the grimness of it made her afraid. Snow had fallen early, and then, because it was late in the season, had thawed quickly and now only lay in the hollows to any depth, though a thin coating still spread over the hillside. Every boulder stood out black as ink against the whiteness, and crows were wheeling about in the dark sky—not an enlivening prospect at all. The draughts that blew from the keen outer air into the warm kitchen were as sharp as knives; but Mysie did not heed them. She pressed her nose against the little window and gazed out—something was moving on the hillside.

'What's that yer seein', Mysie?' Mother asked from the fire, turning a scone as she spoke, 'Is't yer faither?'

'Aye, its' Faither an' Jock.'

'He'll have had an' awfae coorse day on the hill,' said Mother, dusting the flour from the last scone with a bunch of feathers. A delicious smell of burning flour spread through the kitchen and Mysie sniffed with pleasure—tea was not very far off now. Mother swung the girdle off the chain, and put the kettle on so as to be ready when Father arrived, and Mysie jumped down from the chair by the window.

'I'll gang oot,' she cried, her little hand stretching up to the snib of the door in vain; she never could reach it unaided, though she was always making the attempt.

'Bide where ye are, Mysie—you've got the fidgets the day,' said Mother quite crossly. 'What for would ye gang oot intil the snow, and you wi' sic a dose o' the cold last week?'

Poor Mysie! Evidently she must cultivate patience. She settled down at the window again and watched the black specks on the hillside as they came slowly nearer and nearer. Jock, the great black collie who lorded it over hundreds of trembling sheep, came bounding down ahead of his master. The shepherd himself seemed to be walking very carefully.

'Faither's walkin' gey slow,' Mysie sighed; her mother came across to the window and looked up the glen too.

'Aye, he's no hurryin' himsel,' she admitted after a minute's survey.

At last the latch was lifted, a blast of wind rushed into the kitchen, and the shepherd and Jock made their entrance.

'Eh, man, shut tae the door!' cried Mother. Mysie slipped down from her perch and stood beside her father, plucking at his coat—she just reached up to his knee.

'What's yon?' she piped out. It seemed her predestined trial never to be able to get high enough to see what was going on in the world. Just now she could make out that up there in her father's arms something lay—but what that something was she could not possibly see from where she stood.

'See here, Mysie,' her father said, stooping down to her level at last; 'here's for ye.' The something in his arms looked like a hank of wet wool.

'What is't?' Mysie asked, putting up her hand to touch it.

'Come awa an' see, then,' said Father.

He knelt down by the fire and laid the bundle ever so carefully on the warm hearth-stone.

Mysie drew near, her eyes large with interest:

'It's a wee lambie!' she cried at last, as the shepherd spread out its four tiny black legs towards the blaze. The hank of wool began to take on form; she could distinguish a little black face now among the drenched fleece.

Mother drew near too: 'Is't no' deid, Tam?' she asked.

'She's gey far through onyway: get a drop warm milk, Maggie,' he directed.

Mother bustled about to get the milk, and Father strode out of the kitchen, crossed to the barn, and returned carrying a bunch of wheat-straws.



Mysie crouched down on the floor to watch what was going to happen. Her father had lifted the lamb again and was feeling round its tiny black muzzle—so tightly shut . . . how big his hands looked, thought Mysie; how wee and dead the lambie! Its little mouth was shut, as if with an iron clamp, and Father didn't seem able to get it open. . . .

'Hoots, Tam, gie her tae me,' Mother said at last. She sat down on the old chair beside the fire and directed him to lay the lamb on her knees. To all appearance life was gone; the pitiful little black head fell down on one side helplessly.

But Mother, whose hands were not so big and clumsy, began to force the lamb's mouth open, till Mysie cried out in delight:

'It's got a wee bittie o' a tongue, Mither!'

Mother was far too absorbed in her task to answer. She took a mouthful of the warm milk, and holding the lamb's mouth open, put one of the wheat-straws in at the side of it. Then very slowly she directed a trickle of milk down through the straw. Drop by drop the milk went down, but still there was no sign of life. 'I maun jist sit here a wee,' said Mother, 'an' see if she'll come roond.' After twenty minutes or so, another spoonful of milk was conveyed into the lamb's mouth. Father had lighted his pipe and sat down on the other side of the hearth; Mysie on her three-legged stool kept close to Mother and the lambie, and Jock had squatted on the other side, his bright eyes fixed unwaveringly on the thing he had helped to rescue.

It was a half-hour of breathless interest.

'Mysie,' Mother whispered, as if a sleeping child was on her knee, 'gang you tae the drawer and find a bit rag for me, like a good lassie.'

Mysie could reach up to the drawer, so she proudly did her mother's bidding; but she wondered what the rag was wanted for.

'Pit it in the milk,' Mother directed, 'an' syne gie it tae me.'

Mysie handed her the rag dripping with milk, and saw the end of it laid upon the lamb's tongue. Father took his pipe out of his mouth and leant forward to watch, Jock jumped to his feet and wagged his tail—what was happening Mysie wondered?

'She's sookin' noo!' Mother exclaimed in a voice of

triumph, and Jock gave a yelp of excitement, understanding perfectly all about it. Languidly, as if reluctant to take up this painful business of living, the lamb sucked at her rag. Slowly, drop by drop, the milk went down, and a tremor of vitality began to pulse in the hank of wool.

'She'll dae fine,' said the shepherd. 'Gie's oor tea, Maggie—I'd clean forgot a' about it.'

Mother gave a laugh of relief and deposited the lamb on the hearth again, while Jock waved his plume-like tail joyously as if to say 'How clever we are!' Mysie gave a croodle of satisfaction.

'I want the lambie for mysel', she demanded, plucking at her father's coat.

'Weel, maybe—see here then, Mysie, tak the stool an' sit near hand an' watch her: see the sticks dinna drop oot on her—tak the wee tongs in yer hand an' sit quiet like a fine lassie.'

What a delightful task that was! Perched on her three-legged stool, armed with the old twisted iron tongs, Mysie sat there as immovable as a little Buddha, watching her lamb. When a stick fell out upon the hearth, she made a grab at it and replaced it on the fire, her eyes fixed jealously on the lamb, lest any spark should fall upon its fleece.

'Come awa til yer tea,' Mother cried at last, but Mysie protested:

'I dinna want my tea: I'm mindin' my lambie.'

'Hoots, Jock'll mind the lambie; come awa,' said Father, who had much more confidence in Jock's guardianship than in Mysie's.

At the sound of his name, Jock, now asleep after his labours, raised his head and looked at the shepherd, waiting for orders.

'Watch her,' said Father, and Jock walked across to the hearth with the grave, responsible air of a human being, to see that all went well with the lamb.

Thus released from her charge, Mysie came gladly enough to the tea-table. She was a great pet of her Father's and would often sit on his knee at meals, to be stuffed with scones and jam, or porridge and treacle (when the cream was scarce), to an alarming extent.

This evening she heard all about where her lamb had been found. How Jock had discovered a dead sheep in a snowdrift, and how they had thought that the lamb was dead also.

'I didna think there was ony life in her,' Father said, laughing, 'but Jock there, he wudna leave her, he aye yappit at me an' gave a bit pat tae the lambie, an' syne he'd look up an' yap again—Dod! he's an' awfae wise beast is Jock!'

'He's that,' Mother agreed.

Then just as Mysie was fishing up the last delicious sticky mouthful of sugar from the bottom of her teacup, a faint, thrilling cry went up from the hearth.

'Ma-a-ah,' and again 'Ma-a-ah.'—It was a bleat of desolation that no pen can describe: all the helpless, orphaned woe of the universe seemed to be in the sound.

Jock gave a yelp of excitement. Mysie slipped off her father's knee and flew to the fireside, and the lamb lifted its feeble little black face and gazed up at the child and the dog.

'She's greetin'!' Mysie cried—'Mither, she's greetin'!' She thought something was wrong with her lamb that it could utter such a plaint.

'Hoots, Mysie, she's no greetin' ava, she's fine noo; wait a wee, an' she'll be on her legs.'

This prophecy was very quickly fulfilled, for in about half an hour the little creature struggled up on to its shaking legs, gave a ridiculous wriggle to its tail, and then took a tipsy gambol across the floor.

'See yon,' said the shepherd. 'Ye'll hae yer wurk wi' her, Maggie, noo she's come to sae weel; ye maun get a bottle for her.'

'I've Mysie's bottle ben the hoose,' said Mother—it was not so very long ago that Mysie had been quite as helpless as the lamb.

'I'm thinkin' she'll be waur tae manage than ever Mysie was,' said Father, with a grin.

Now that the lamb had come alive and found a voice, it was difficult to keep Mysie away from this new toy. Her solitary childhood had known no such pleasure. She would have liked to be allowed to administer the first 'bottle,' but Mother insisted on doing this herself; so Mysie had to be content with keeping close to her new-found delight, stroking its tightly curled fleece and small black face, and gazing into its glassy eyes.

But after a few days Mother would fill the bottle and allow Mysie to feed the lamb. This was an exquisite delight to the

child, and an ever-recurring employment : to see the lamb suck up a bottle of milk made Mysie scream with pleasure, and the little creature became so attached to the hand that fed it that Mysie and her lamb were seldom apart.

In a fortnight's time, ' Buckie,' as Mysie chose to call her pet, was as strong as possible and began to gambol about the kitchen to such an extent that Mother opened the door and drove the child and the lamb out on to the hillside to play.

The late snow had disappeared; there was a sense of approaching spring everywhere. Under the dry grey stalks of the heather that had been fired the year before, delicate blades of brilliant green grass sprang up, and the bare twigs of the birch-trees in the glen were purple. Moreover, something wonderful had happened—an event that is welcomed by many a country child : the frogs had come. The old peat cutting at the back of the cottage was suddenly all a-hum with them; they seemed to have arrived in one night, out of nowhere, Mysie thought. It was quite a puzzle to her.

' Whaur dae the puddocks come frae?' she asked. ' Dae they come loupin' ower the hill when I'm in my bed?'

' Aye, Mysie, they maun loup frae somewhere,' Father said, laughing.

Mysie had funny dreams of the frog army arriving across the hill that night, and in the morning she resolved that she and Buckie would go down to the peat cutting and visit them. She said nothing about this to Mother, though, for she had often been told not to go near the bog. Of course, it was for that very reason the most coveted spot in the glen. The peat was rich and black, and beautiful patches of bright red moss grew upon it, while, looking down into the pools between the moss-islands, one saw all manner of funny live things. Mysie had no name for them, but they interested her intensely, and often when Mother's back was turned she would run down to the bog and lie on her face to peer down into the mysterious pools where so much was going on . . . it was a joy, too, to poke in the peat with a stick. This morning Mysie watched a favourable moment when Mother was busy making broth, and called Buckie to follow her. The little couple ran out at the door together, and Mother, peeling turnips, called after Mysie : ' Dinna gang far frae the door, bairn.'

'Na,' Mysie called back, aware that she was strictly within the truth in saying so, for the peat bog was delightfully near. She frolicked about before the door with Buckie for a few minutes—just to make Mother think that all was right—and then set off as fast as she could run towards the bog, Buckie gambolling after her. As they came near it, a fascinating sound like very distant singing delighted Mysie's ears; on the edge of the cutting she stood still to view the life of the frogs. Hundreds and hundreds of them were there, with their sprawling legs, wide mouths, and goggle eyes. Looking very closely, she could see their throats pulse as the humming noise came from them. The bog pools were covered with great masses of frog's eggs floating there like lumps of jelly. Was there ever a more interesting sight?

Mysie squatted down on the edge of the cutting with her arm flung round Buckie's neck, and gazed at the frogs. Buckie, who naturally did not find any interest in the sight, became restive and wanted to run about; but Mysie would not give in to the lamb's wishes on this point—frogs were not to be seen every day!

One big, wide-mouthed croaker had landed on an old tree-stump in the middle of the bog, and sat there like a king. Mysie thought how delightful it would be to get a long stick and poke him till he jumped off his little island with a splash. This was not very difficult to manage. She ran off to the thin birch wood that grew near the house, and tugged at a stick twice as long as herself which lay among a pile of brush-wood. It seemed as if it would never come out, but when it did it proved wonderfully long, and Mysie trailed it behind her, back to the peat cutting, Buckie of course gambolling at her heels.

The frog still sat on his island, goggling and croaking. Mysie sat down again to observe him, and then cautiously, with immense difficulty, stretched out her long stick towards the frog king. Alas, alas! the stick was too heavy and she had stretched too far! Mysie gave an ear-splitting scream, clutched at Buckie, and down they both went together into the black abyss of the peat bog. There were not more than six inches of water in it, but to the child it seemed as deep as the sea. Oh how she screamed in her agony of terror, down there in these slimy depths among the frogs!

Buckie was floundering beside her, and gave forth a melancholy bleat. Was there ever such a helpless little pair?

The next moment help came. For at the sound of Mysie's scream, Jock came across the hillside like an arrow from the bow. He had been at the sheep fank with his master, and recognised the note of terror in Mysie's cry. With a bound he came into the mud beside her, took a large mouthful of her frock, and dragged the child up on to the dry ground. Then down again he went once more, and this time rescued Buckie. Mud-spattered, panting, he stood beside these two ridiculous mites so unable to take care of themselves. Only speech was wanting to express his contempt for their folly. . . . Once safely on the dry ground again, Mysie set off as fast as her short legs would carry her towards the cottage, howling as she went. She arrived there a tear-stained little image, woeful to behold. Jock in the meantime was driving Buckie home by means of soft barks and an occasional gentle nip; he had compassion upon the silly thing, not yet come even to the idiotic maturity of a sheep.

'Gosh me!' Mother cried, and again 'Gosh me! sic a pair o' ye!'

Mysie would have come in for chastisement in all probability, if Father had not appeared very opportunely for his dinner. His roars of laughter at sight of Mysie and Buckie at first made Mother cross, but finally made her laugh too.

'You sort Mysie,' said Father, 'an' I'll try ma' hand wi' Buckie.'

That indeed was a cleaning up. Mother got a tub into the kitchen, and Mysie, divested of her peaty garments, was scrubbed in the hot, soapy water. Her very hair was filled with 'glaur,' as Mother expressed it, and her little feet were as brown as if they had been dipped in walnut-juice.

'There, noo, ye'll gang til yer bed a' the day; that'll maybe teach ye tae keep awa frae the bog,' Mother said, polishing up Mysie's face till it shone. Signs of renewed weeping appeared at this sentence, so it was commuted by Father's pleading:

'The bairn's been feared, Maggie—pit her intil the box-bed there, she's better by you.' So into the box-bed Mysie went, instead of being consigned to the cupboard-like room off the kitchen where she generally slept, and in its fusty depths she cuddled down gladly enough after her cold adventure.

The washing of Buckie was then begun, and that was a terrible business. Pail after pail of water was soused over the lamb before her curly wool became even tolerably clean. Then she was tied to a big chair near the fire to dry, the kitchen floor was wiped up, and the unfortunate incident (in newspaper language) was closed.

This unpleasant adventure seemed only to strengthen the bonds of love between Mysie and her lamb. They were never apart now—'wherever Mysie went the lamb was sure to go' in fact. When some three months had passed, Buckie's fleece had grown long and white, and budding horns appeared on her head. Then alas! it is sad to relate, greed became the master passion of the lamb. She was so impatient to get at her bottles of rich new milk, that she would knock Mysie over in her haste, so Mother had to administer them.

There was not much gentleness noticeable in the creature then: she sucked at the bottle with such eagerness that her eyes stuck out with the effort, and the milk frothed round her greedy black mouth. By-and-by the number of bottles was diminished, and Buckie found that she must look elsewhere for some of her nourishment. She began to crop delicately at the greenest grass that was to be found, rejecting all but the most tender blades and munching these with the air of an epicure. Mysie took pleasure in discovering exquisite green patches among the heather, and would lead Buckie to them that she might enjoy the tender fare. Then Mysie would make wreaths of heather and ferns and hang them round Buckie's neck, and twine them round the budding horns, and lead her home crowned like some sacrificial animal decked for the altar. At first Buckie did not resent these adornments, but as time went on they began to tease her, and she gave an impatient toss of her little horned head, as much as to say, 'Leave me alone: I want to eat.' Mysie did not mind the playful toss in the least; it was all part of the endless game that she and Buckie had played the whole summer through.

The autumn was coming on again, however, and it was too cold for Mysie to sit out on the hillside any longer, so there was nothing for it but that Buckie should be admitted as an inmate of the kitchen again. The creature was certainly a good deal in the way, for she had grown enormously, and had not the best



manners imaginable. But, as Mother well knew, it would be a distinct gain to keep Buckie and feed her for another winter, for the shepherd's wife who rears a lamb by hand always gets the fleece as a perquisite. So Buckie was going to be well looked after; it would not do to let her merge into the herd upon the hill.

At first Mysie was delighted with this arrangement; but ever so slowly a disillusionment set in. Buckie might almost have known the value that was put upon her, for she began to presume upon it, to assert herself, and to establish rights. On cold autumn days she now took up a position right in front of the fire, where Mysie used to sit; and the child had to content herself with the chimney-corner instead. After this Buckie discovered that Mysie always got a 'piece' in the morning; and it became her object to filch the bit of bread and butter from the child and eat it up. Nor was this all: the creature developed an extraordinary slyness and knew perfectly well that it would not do to steal Mysie's 'piece' when anyone was there to see.

One day there was, in consequence, a sad scene. Mother had spread a great big delicious scone with treacle, and given it to Mysie to eat while she went down to the burn for water.

Mysie was sitting on her three-legged stool in the chimney-corner; Buckie, to all appearances unheeding of anything that was going on, lay as usual before the fire. But no sooner had the door closed behind Mother, than Mysie heard the tap, tap of Buckie's hoofs on the floor, and the next minute the scone was twitched out of her hand. Mysie decided to fight for her treasure and gave Buckie a vigorous shove; but a savage thrust from the now quite formidable horns made her retreat discomfited to the door. There she watched the disappearance of the scone.

'Buckie grabbit my scone and treacle!' the child cried, as her mother came in, 'an' she butted at me!'

'Haud yer tongue, Mysie, and dinna tell lees,' said Mother. 'Yer ower fond o' scones and treacle; yer wantin' anither, but ye'll no get it.'

Certainly appearances were against the child and for the lamb: Mysie's mouth was well smeared with treacle, whereas Buckie lay on the same spot of floor she had occupied when Mother left the house; she wore an air of lamb-like innocence and there were no smears of treacle round her mouth. Of course

no refuge but tears was possible for Mysie; she was all beslobbered with them when the shepherd came in half an hour later.

'What ails the bairn?' he asked his wife.

'She tell't me a lee, Tam; dinna speak tae her,' Mother answered. Buckie by the fire paid no heed to what was going on, and the shepherd (a great disciplinarian in his way) gave Mysie a grave look.

'Ye ken whaur bairns that tell lees gang, Mysie,' he said darkly.

'Can lambies gang til the bad place?' sobbed the child, stung by the injustice that was being done her. But Father did not understand this remark in the least; he only thought it profane.

'Haud yer tongue, Mysie: dinna be sayin' sic things,' he said.

After this incident a distinct coldness grew up between the former playmates. Taught by sad experience, Mysie always ran out and drew the door shut after her when she got her 'piece.' The shepherd told his little daughter that she was not as fond of Buckie as she used to be.

'Na; she's ower big,' was the cautious reply, 'an' she's no' the same.'

Mother would sometimes pass her fingers through Buckie's splendid fleece in admiration, calling her husband's attention to it. 'She's an awfae fine fleece on her,' she would say; 'I'll get a frock for Mysie yet off her.'

During the winter months Buckie learnt a new accomplishment. She chose now to join the family at tea and get a drink out of a cup like any Christian. The shepherd one day in joke substituted tea for the usual milk; but after a preliminary sputter and sneeze, Buckie quaffed off the tea with infinite relish. After this her craving for tea became inordinate, and every day she ran to the table, bleating, and would give them no peace till she had had her longed-for stimulant. It was the funniest sight to see her stand on her hind-legs, placing her two front ones on the table, and utter '*Bah-Bah-Bah*' as she gazed at the teacups. The shepherd roared with laughter and encouraged the new game. One evening, to tease her, he hid an oatcake in his pocket, and Buckie began searching for the food as a dog might have done. At last she managed to poke her nose into the shepherd's pocket, but instead of the oatcake she drew out a long bit of twist tobacco. There was a yell of derision, as Buckie turned away with the bit of tobacco hanging from her mouth.

'Whisht; wait or we see what she'll dae wi' it,' said the shepherd.

Buckie stood irresolute for a moment, not sure how to attack his new foodstuff, then gave it a vigorous chew, finally swallowed down the whole twist.

'Dod! was there ever sic' a sheep!' they all cried.

Very quickly this new passion for tobacco grew as marked in Buckie as the passion for tea. Men that came to the house would tease the creature, holding out bits of twist to her, and then hiding them in their pockets till she searched them out. Mysie would join in the laughter that followed when Buckie successfully found and ate the tobacco; but though she laughed at Buckie she never caressed her now.

'It's near about Buckie's birthday,' the shepherd told the child as spring came round again. 'D'ye mind the wee bit bundle she was yon day, Mysie?'

It was certainly difficult to believe that Buckie was really the same creature as the pitiful bundle of wool that had lain on the hearth one short year before. What with all the rich milk she drank and the quantity of mixed feeding of one sort or another that she had assimilated, Buckie had grown to a portentous size in her one year of life. Her wool was thick and white, untorn by bramble or heather—the hardy outdoor sheep on the hill, with their ragged grey fleeces, scarcely seemed to be of the same breed as this fatted house-sheltered creature. But by the inexorable justness of things, gentle timid hearts beat under their tattered fleeces, while Buckie's easy life seemed to be developing almost human vices in her nature. Mysie, who would have walked alone and unafraid among hundreds of the hill sheep, did not now like to be alone with Buckie in the kitchen for five minutes!

It fell on a day when the spring was well advanced, and all the world green again, that an urgent message came for Mother to go down the glen to a cottage where some one lay ill. Mother was sewing by the window; she glanced at the clock: 'It's near four,' she said, 'Tam 'll be in the noo—I'll can leave Mysie a wee.'

'I'll come wi' ye,' Mysie whimpered, plucking at Mother's apron.

'Ye canna, Mysie; ye'd be in the road. Ye'll bide oot by an' play at a shoppie till Faither comes in—will ye no', dearie?'

This was such a tempting proposal, that Mysie fell in with it at once. A small burn ran beside the door, where any child might play in safety; and here Mysie had an old box set up to act as a shop, and white and grey pebbles from the brook did duty for various articles of commerce. She would often spend hours there, perfectly content, without anyone near her—why not now, then, when it was so necessary? It seemed an obvious arrangement.

'Ye'll hae yer tea when Faither comes doon off the hill,' Mother said, 'an' ye'll bide here like a good lassie for half an 'oor.'

All was well with Mysie for quite an hour after Mother left her. The play was delightfully realistic, for she had been provided with 'a puckle tea,' a handful of sugar, and half a dozen currants. The child never even looked up to see the last of Mother, so happily contented she was with her mimic stage. Why can we not carry with us into later life the glowing imagination that inspired our childish games? How poor we are now, when our gold must really be gold, in comparison with that exhaustless wealth of childhood which turned every withered leaf into a nugget!

A whole procession of interesting characters visited the shop asking for all manner of things. The King and Queen came first, in a coach and four, wearing of course crowns of solid gold, and trailing robes of velvet: curiously enough (though it did not strike Mysie as being at all out of the picture) they came to buy tea and sugar, and there had to be a great fussing and doing up of bits of paper into bags, before their Majesties drove away with their homely purchase.

'It'll be the best yer wantin', yer Majesty, the kind Mother taks at 1s. 2d.?' Mysie asked innocently, and the Queen replied with the same artlessness. 'Aye; yon'll be the kind.'

There was, of course, a slight difficulty in making both questions and answers oneself, because one knew what the answer was going to be; but what is imagination good for if it cannot surmount such a tiny obstacle as this?—'barriers are for those that cannot fly.'

After the King and Queen, came the Minister and his wife, then the farmer's wife down the glen, finally some tinkers begging, who were relentlessly shown the door.

Then Mysie looked up suddenly; the sun was no longer high;

a chill breeze was blowing; the game had come to an end; the shop wasn't a shop any longer, only an old box covered with stones, and worst of all the King and Queen, the Minister and his wife, the farmer's wife and the tinkers had all disappeared, and Mysie was horribly alone!

'I want m' tea,' she cried, and ran up to the house to find Father—but when she got there, there was no sign of him. All round about the child the stillness seemed to become of a sudden terrible, oppressive—a thing to be escaped from at any cost. She rushed into the kitchen. The clock was ticking with its usual tranquil sound, the fire had burned low, and before it stood Buckie. She pattered across the floor to Mysie at once, and the child, though shrinking a little from the creature, would have welcomed almost any companion in that hour of loneliness.

'I'm awfae hungert, Buckie,' she said, glad to hear her own voice.

'Bah-Bah,' Buckie answered, quite intelligently—they were evidently of one mind.

Mysie went across to the dresser and opened the door, to see if any scones were to be found. She knelt down on the floor, and reached into the darkness of the cupboard. But just as she was feeling about there for the scones, Buckie shouldered up against the child and began to investigate matters for herself. In a minute she had her big, horned head right inside the press. Crash went a pile of plates, one on the top of the other: Buckie did not mind in the least, but went on rummaging to right and left in search of food. Down came an open jar of treacle and fell out upon the floor, spreading in a lazy black stream across the well-scrubbed boards. Crash went another heap of plates, over went the sugar basin, and the sugar mixed with the treacle. This stayed Buckie's career of destruction for a time; she was very fond of sweet things, and fed greedily on the sticky mass till it had all disappeared.

Mysie in the meantime, filled with dismay, made an effort to get the cupboard-door fastened, but Buckie would not be interfered with—she lowered her horns threateningly at the child and returned to search into the cupboard again. A pile of oat-cakes was the next find. Buckie, bewildered by this profusion of good things, tried to eat half a dozen of the cakes at once: nibbling the corner off one, she would toss it aside in favour of another which looked nicer, then it would be discarded and a

third one chosen—so it went on till all the cakes lay broken and trampled on the floor.

Mysie began to cry bitterly now, powerless to stop this destruction. She was very hungry, poor child, to add to her troubles, and in her humility she took up one of the cakes that Buckie had rejected and began to eat it.

In a moment Buckie had twitched it away: Mysie was not even to be allowed to eat the refuse.

'I'm hungry, Buckie,' the child sobbed, appealing as if to a human tyrant; Buckie only stamped and butted in reply.

Mysie had now reached an extremity of hunger and fear. She looked round for help. If only she could get up on the top of the dresser then Buckie couldn't reach her!

Waiting till she saw Buckie, head down, gorging on a pat of butter, Mysie seized a scone from the floor, drew a chair to the side of the dresser, and climbed up in triumph to a blessed haven of safety.

Buckie looked up, but could not reach her—Mysie drew a breath of relief and munched her scone. It was not very pleasant to stand there perched on the narrow dresser top; yet our poor little St. Simon Stylites could do nothing else. She sustained a prolonged siege, for Buckie, very vindictive, came and stood below her and gave a savage butt at the dresser. It shook under the blow and a couple of plates crashed down from the rack above Mysie's head and fell to the floor. But the dresser was old and firm, so this was all that Buckie's evil temper could accomplish. Secure that she was out of reach of her enemy, Mysie stood there and contemplated the wreck of worlds below her.

Scones and cakes that were to have fed the household for a week now lay scattered over the floor, stamped on and wasted. Buckie had walked backwards and forwards through the pool of treacle, and sticky black imprints of her hoofs were everywhere to be seen. She had begun to eat a pound of butter where it fell, but at each lick it had been pushed farther along the floor, and by evil chance had landed in front of the fire, there to melt away into a large pool of grease. The broken dishes had been tossed hither and thither by Buckie's impatient horns . . . a woeful scene indeed! Mysie in her loneliness and dismay had begun to cry again, when she heard the sound of Jock's well-known bark. The next moment he bounded into the

kitchen. Just for a second he paused and looked about him, then made straight for Buckie, who had taken up a defiant attitude before the fire, beside the melted butter.

Now Buckie had hitherto, for obvious reasons, been very respectful to Jock; but this fateful afternoon seemed to have wakened in the creature a realisation of her own powers. Jock had teeth it was true; but had she not horns? Some such train of reasoning must have passed through her brain, for she lowered her head menacingly at the dog. In a moment the kitchen was turned into a pandemonium. Over went the chairs and Buckie with them—Jock bounded across the furniture biting, barking and snarling at the sheep in wild indignation.

Mysie, from the dresser, screamed aloud, and in her terror brought down more dishes from the rack above to add to the confusion. Then Buckie got on her feet again, and began to drive Jock into a corner: once there, pinned against the wall, horns would be better weapons than teeth. But just as things had come to this pass, in walked Father. Like heavenly music to poor little Mysie's ears, were those awful curses which were hurled broadcast at Jock and at Buckie, as the shepherd strode across the room and seized Buckie by the fleece!

'Sae ye'd kill Jock, wad ye, ye deevil?' he cried, apprehending Jock's predicament in a moment, pinned there into the corner under Buckie's wicked horns. For one terrifying moment Mysie wondered if Buckie was going to get the better of Father too?—then she saw the sheep a mere struggling defiant bundle of wool being hurtled out at the door, with Jock barking gaily behind her.

Ah, the comfort of that moment, when Father came back into the kitchen, reached up his arms to Mysie, and lifted her down from the dresser with words of endearment!

'Were ye feared, my wee dearie? Whaur's Mither—did Buckie fear ye? Hoo long hae ye been on the dresser?'

The shepherd sat down by the fire, took the child on his knee, and kissed her little tear-wet face, while she began the tale of her sorrows:

'Mither gaed oot, an' I was wantin' my tea, an' I went til the press for a scone, an' Buckie pushed me awa', an' pit her heid intil the press, an' the plates fell oot, an' she grabbit at the scones, an' they fell oot, an' the treacle feel oot, an' the sugar, an' I wantit a bit oat-cake an' Buckie grabbit it frae me,



an' I took a chair an' got ontill the dresser, an' Buckie butted on the dresser, an' the plates cam doon an' Jock cam in an' they commenced tae fight . . . .'

It all came out in one long woeful sentence, punctuated by sobs and tremors, as Mysie nestled down into her father's arms with a blissful sense of security.

'Weel, weel,' said the shepherd ruefully, looking about him at the awful disorder of the kitchen, 'I maun sort up a wee afore Maggie comes hame—sit you there, Mysie, on the creepie, there's a fine lassie.'

Though a little afraid to get down from her father's knee, Mysie had to obey. She perched herself on the stool by the fire and watched the tidying up. It was no easy job. Before the problem of how to remove a sea of black treacle and a pound of melted butter mixed up with pashed oat-cakes off a wooden floor, the manly spirit of the shepherd speedily quailed. He gathered up the broken dishes, set the upturned chairs on their legs again, took a shovel and scraped up a certain amount of the débris—but at sight of the treacle and butter he stood aghast and grinned.

'I maun jist leave it tae Maggie,' he said. 'There's things a man canna attemp'—we'll tak oor tea, Mysie.'

Somehow or other they gathered together the materials for a meal, and were eating it with the greatest contentment in the dirty kitchen when Mother made her appearance.

Mysie crowed with delight, pointing to the treacle-covered floor as the greatest joke; while Father, roaring with laughter, described the scene he had come in upon. As was natural, perhaps, Mother was not inclined to take such a humorous view of the matter.

'Gin ye had the scrubbin' o' yon floor, Tam,' she said, 'ye'd no' be lauchin' that wye,' and she added bitterly, 'Buckie 'd need a finè fleece tae pay for this day's work.'

There was now a sort of armed neutrality between Jock and Buckie. Whenever the dog came into the kitchen he lifted his lip and snarled, and the sheep lowered her horns in response. But they were both sharply looked after, so no open battle was possible.

'Buckie's getting tae be an' awfae fash,' Mother said often,

then she would look at the creature's splendid thick fleece and thriftily decide to endure all things for it.

Mysie now openly hated her former playmate. She would never stay alone with Buckie, though her parents laughed and told her 'no' tae be a wee silly, feared o' a sheep.' Even they, however, could not deny that Buckie's character was not improving: every week her temper became more imperious, her attitude more aggressive—one might have thought that the cottage belonged to the creature.

About this time a family of 'lodgers,' as they were termed, came to a farm further down the glen. They may have been excellent young people; but they became the instruments of the decline and fall of poor Buckie. One afternoon two of these lodgers came up to the cottage to buy some milk. They were idle young men, and seeing the pet sheep, thought they would play with it. Mysie, emboldened by their presence, stood by to watch, and gave shrill utterance to her hatred of Buckie:—

'She was my wee lambie, but I canna bide her noo.' Questioned more closely, Mysie explained the reason of her dislike, and gave a description of Buckie's appetite that astonished the young men.

'Try her wi' a bit baccy,' Mysie urged. She had perched herself on the top of the dyke, out of reach of her enemy and could enjoy the scene.

One of the lads took out a tobacco-pouch, and proffered some of the mixture to the animal. She nibbled it up as if it had been corn. Then with a shriek of laughter one of them placed a bowler hat on Buckie's horns, and got her to prance for a minute on her hind legs by means of dangling the tobacco-pouch out of reach above her. Mysie too screamed with laughter. There was no eye to notice the complete degradation that had been worked on the poor beast that stood there like Samson of old, making sport for the Philistines! After this the lads came often to the cottage to tease Buckie and play with her. They fed her on tobacco and sweets and encouraged her to butt savagely on the smallest provocation. 'It's a good thing shearin's no' far off,' Mother said.

Just before the shearing, 'Uncle Geordie,' as Mysie called him (though he was really her mother's uncle, not her own), arrived from Glasgow to pay his annual visit to his relations. Uncle Geordie was a retired tradesman, reputed to be 'gae weel

aff'; but his affluence had not kept the poor man from acquiring chronic rheumatism in his knees, which made it necessary for him to walk leaning on two sticks. In spite of this infirmity, however, he had unfailing good spirits. His little, deep-set eyes were creased all round with innumerable wrinkles caused by laughter, and he seemed able to find a joke everywhere.

'When I've naething else tae lauch at, I jist set the ae thoomb to lauch at the tither,' he used to tell Mysie, holding up his thumbs like two little mannikins bowing to each other, till the child screamed with amusement. Seated on the bench by the cottage door with Mysie beside him, Uncle Geordie was a great deal happier than the proverbial king. Buckie was encouraged to be one of the party, for Mysie was not afraid of her when Uncle Geordie was there—a vigorous thrust with one of the sticks would generally keep the sheep at a safe distance.

Uncle Geordie kept a large supply of 'conversation lozenges' in one pocket for Mysie, and quids of twist tobacco in the other for Buckie. It became a favourite game with him to try to cheat both the child and the animal. Diving his hands into his pockets, he would then hide them inside his coat and deftly change the sweets into the tobacco hand and *vice versa*. Finally he held out both hands, repeating the old rhyme of

Knick-knack, which hand will ye tak?

Buckie invariably scented out the tobacco long before Mysie had made up her mind where the sweets were to be found. Never was sheep so depraved: she would have chewed tobacco all day long if she had got it to chew. One day she even stole into the kitchen and ate up a whole dish of sliced ham prepared for Uncle Geordie's dinner. No one would have believed that Buckie was the thief if she had not been seen coming out of the door with a long slice of ham hanging from her mouth, munching it in guilty haste as she went. . . .

'Maircy! the beast's awfae,' Mother cried, but she added darkly, 'A good thing the shearin's no' far off.'

The shearing was a great day in the glen. Mysie loved it, and was allowed to run about at will among the crowd of shepherds and collies. Hundreds of sheep had been brought down from the hill, and were now penned into the stone folds, waiting to be clipped. The whole air smelt of wool and tar, and echoed with the bleating of sheep and yelping of dogs. There was a sense of excitement and bustle everywhere.

Mysie, who was a great favourite with the shepherds, was lifted on to the broad turf top of the sheepfold wall so that she might look down into the crowded pens. The sheep were huddled together so closely that you could not have put your hand down between them. Now and then to Mysie's huge delight, Jock, or one of the other dogs, would bound into the fold and walk across on the backs of the sheep as if on solid ground.

Then the gate of the fank would open, and two of the shepherds would clutch at a sheep and bear it out struggling to the shearers, who sat on funny long wooden stools just outside the gate.

Oh, how the sheep struggled, and how helpless they were in the hands of the shearers! Thrown on their backs, with their stiff black legs beating the air, they had to lie and be snipped and clipped at by the awful shears. White as snow, shorn and naked looking they lay there, and another heavy grey fleece was thrown on the ground. Then Mysie always held her breath and leant forward to watch that thrilling moment when Father dipped a long iron rod, with a circular thing on the end of it, into a huge bubbling pot of tar, and approached with the dripping rod to where the beautiful snow-white sheep lay. Down went the round end of the rod on to the white wool, and a great black letter was stamped on the sheep.

Mysie could never get over the impression that it hurt them somehow, tho' Father had told her a dozen times that it didn't. To-day there was special interest about the shearing, for was not Buckie to be shorn? The whole morning Buckie marched about all unconscious of the fate in store for her. On every side she was greeted with jeers and laughter:

'Hoo are ye the day Buckie?'

'Are ye for a pipe?'

'Ye'll be braw the nicht wantin' yon fleece!'

And Buckie shouldered her way through them all, a privileged character, butting fiercely at her enemies the dogs—a sight to be seen for size and rude behaviour. She came impudently up to the gate of the fank and stared in at the trembling sheep huddled behind it—poor things that they were, to be held there in durance by a few men and dogs!

As she stood thus by the gate staring contemptuously at her fellow-sheep, two shepherds came up behind her and caught her by the fleece—that wonderful fleece that had not its equal for thickness in the whole flock. There was a stiff encounter

between Buckie and the men; they were tall and strong, but it took all their strength to cope with Buckie. She reared on her hind legs, beating the air with her hoofs like a savage horse, then suddenly lowered her big horned head and tried to butt, then stood stock still, her forefeet driven into the ground. What insult was this that was going to be offered her? She refused to be hustled along. But hustled she was, relentlessly, and flung like any poor common timid sheep on to the clipping stool, there to lie helpless under the awful, glittering shears. It was vain to struggle now; in that ignoble position strength availed not at all; but if a sheep can think, certainly dark thoughts of vengeance passed through Buckie's brain at that moment. . . . Slash went the shears through the thick wool, slash, slash, again and again, and once the shearer cut too deep and blood gushed out scarlet over the snow-white wool . . . they took a dab of tar and clapped it over the cut . . . another offence this cut and this tar, added to the long accounts that Buckie was adding up against mankind her enemies.

Mysie, on the top of the wall, had watched up to this time in silence; now so great was her interest that she burst into speech.

'Eh, Faither, is Buckie tae be markit?' she cried.

'Aye, Mysie,' Father called up to her. He was approaching, as he spoke, with the tar-dipped brand ready for use.

'But, Faither, Buckie's got a name, what for will ye gie her anither?'

'I've nae time for yer clavers,' said the shepherd, who was indeed busy enough in all conscience. And with that he planted the brand deep into Buckie's lovely white wool, leaving a big, black letter M upon it.

'There she is—yell no ken her noo,' he said. Thrown upon her feet again, Buckie stood perfectly still for a moment, dazed and trembling, then went off with the grotesque lamb-like gambol that sheep give when they feel themselves rid of their heavy fleeces.

'Ye canna get at me noo, Buckie!' Mysie jeered, from her stronghold on the wall. Buckie however was never thinking of her old playmate. In the distance, far up the road beyond the fank, Uncle Geordie was hirpling along on his two sticks: tobacco might be obtainable—she set off in that direction, and was merged among the other newly clipped and branded sheep that were feeding about everywhere. Mysie returned to her

absorbed contemplation of the shearing, and Buckie was forgotten for the time being.

Buckie shorn was so unrecognisable that Uncle Geordie paid no attention to the sheep that came bounding across the hillside towards him. But an imperative tweak at his pocket, made the old man stand still in amazement.

'Gosh me! it's Buckie!' he exclaimed. 'It'll be baccy yer wantin' ye limmer, is't no?'

He halted on his sticks and felt in his pocket, holding both sticks in one hand as he did so—a distinctly perilous thing to do, for his balance was not secure.

'Na—I've left my pooch in bye,' he said aloud; he shifted his sticks into the other hand as he spoke, to feel if by any chance the missing pouch might be in the left-hand pocket. Buckie dashed round to wait for the coveted mouthful.

'Ye'll hae tae want it,' the old man said, shaking his head, 'It's no' here.' But Buckie would not accept this explanation. She was cross exceedingly, and wanted something to make up for the indignity of losing her fleece and being snipped and plastered with tar and branded. The time had come to assert herself. She therefore stepped back a yard and then ran full tilt against Uncle Geordie. The old man went down on the ground like an overturned nine-pin, his sticks knocked out of his rather feeble grasp, and there he lay helplessly at the mercy of Buckie. She began a deliberate rummage through his pockets for the tobacco she felt must be there. 'Revenge,' said Bacon, 'is a sort of wild justice,' and in the obscure recesses of the sheepy mind some such feeling may have been at work. A few minutes ago, Buckie had been helpless under the hands of the shearers; it was just that Buckie who had been shorn and hurt, should now pillage and hurt in her turn. With her greedy black nose she tugged at the old man's pockets till she tore the lining inside out and extracted some grains of tobacco dust that lingered in the corners of the lining.

Uncle Geordie in the meantime could do nothing to help himself, for whenever he moved Buckie gave a threatening toss of her head, as much as to say, 'You lie still or I'll make you.'

True to his nature the old man laughed aloud at his own ridiculous predicament, then shouted at the top of his voice thinking that some of the shepherds might hear and come to his rescue.

It was not the shepherds, however, but Jock who heard these

distressful cries. Idle for a moment at the gate of the fank, he pricked his ears, and then dashed suddenly across the hillside in the direction of the shout.

Buckie had just decided that no more tobacco was to be found in Uncle Geordie's pockets : she stood and looked contemptuously at her victim : these men that had shorn her and cut her flesh and branded her with hot tar, were poor things after all, easily knocked over, easily kept flat on the ground once they were down—why had she not mastered the others as she had mastered this one?—Then lo, across the heather came Jock with fearful, snapping jaws, and lolling red tongue . . . primeval terrors stirred in the heart of Buckie—the heart that had seemed of late almost human in its degradation. Blind ignominious fear took hold upon her, she was a sheep once more, and nothing but a sheep. Panic-stricken, trembling, panting, fleeing before the hereditary foe of her race, you would scarcely have recognised the doughty Buckie of half an hour before.

And alas, Jock too seemed to have changed back to the primitive beast of prey, to have come near forgetting all his man-taught restraint and gentleness. His old grudge at Buckie rose up hot within him, he wanted to bury his teeth in her throat and revenge himself for that bitter moment when he had been driven into the corner and humiliated. And this was the dog who had found on the hillside that pitiful bundle of wool and known it to be a lamb ! Well, well, such is life !

It is not difficult to say what the issue of the chase would have been, had the road not led past the sheep-fold. Mysie from her watch tower was the first to give warning ; her shrill cry of :

' See Jock after Buckie ! ' drew the attention of the shepherds to what was going on. A volley of curses, frightful to hear, stopped Jock as suddenly as if a bullet had gone through his heart. He came towards his master trembling and contrite, and Buckie fled on down the stoney road at a tremendous pace. Mysie called out again, another and more startling bit of news :

' They've knockit doon Uncle Geordie—he's lyin' east the road ! '

There was general consternation at this, and Father set off running to see what was wrong with the old man. Mysie, too, slipped down from her perch and followed Father, while Jock, humble and anxious, came also, as one of the family. With some difficulty Uncle Geordie was raised on to his stiff old legs, and



supported on his sticks; but instead of complaining about his accident he would do nothing but laugh as he related how it had happened.

'Eh, yon sheep! Yon Buckie! She's an' awfae beast yon!' he cried, wiping his eyes with his red pocket-handkerchief, 'she knockit me doon, and syne she ate a' the linings o' my pockets—see til them!' He turned out all that remained of the linings as he spoke. 'I'd be there yet if it hadna been for Jock,' he added, 'she got a fine fleg when she see'd him comin'!'

Jock wagged his tail humbly, not quite sure yet of his master's forgiveness, and the old man went on:

'Gosh me! tae think a sheep could master a man—I'm a puir bit mannie I'm thinkin'!' And off he went into another chuckle of laughter.

But it was recognised at last that Buckie's time had come.

'We'll no' can keep her anither year,' the shepherd said, grimly, and Mysie plucked at his sleeve.

'Dinna keep Buckie—I'm feared o' her,' she whispered.

'Hoots, Mysie,' said he, not wishing to encourage her fears; but his determination was made none the less.

Buckie's splendid fleece was brought into the kitchen at evening to be admired.

'There's for ye, Maggie—the finest fleece I've seen this long while,' said the shepherd. 'But ye'll no' hae anither—I'm sendin' Buckie awa the morn.'

'Tae the——?' Mother began; but a glance at Mysie silenced her. She need not however have thought her daughter so sensitive—as after events proved. It was two days later that the lodgers from down the glen came up as usual to buy butter and have a game with Buckie: they could not find her, to their great disappointment, and asked Mysie what had become of her pet.

Alas, there was unmistakable glee in the child's voice as she made shrill reply:

*'The butcher's got her.'*

Late that night as Father, Mother, and Uncle Geordie sat round the fire in the kitchen, a scream came from Mysie's sleeping place.

Mother jumped up from her chair to see what was wrong, but before she could cross the kitchen Mysie herself had appeared. Her curls were all tousled over her face, her eyes

wide with fright; she ran blindly to the shepherd, scrambled on to his knee and buried her head against his shoulder.

'What is't, dearie? Were ye dreamin'?' Mother asked.

'I saw the butcher, and he'd a muckle knife an' he kilt—he kilt—he kilt . . .' Mysie's voice died away in an agony of sobs, she could not voice the awfulness of her dream.

The elders exchanged meaning glances across the hearth.

'Was't Buckie he kilt?' Father inquired, and with a fresh burst of weeping Mysie got out the words at last.

'Na—it wasna Buckie—Buckie's a bad beast—it was my wee white lambie.'

Impossible at that moment it seemed, to disentangle the confusion in the child's mind; but Uncle Geordie had a sudden inspiration, of the sort that only comes to the real child-lover.

'Hoots, Mysie,' he said, reaching across and lifting her on to his knee, 'd'ye no ken what came of yer wee white lambie?'

Mysie lifted her tear-stained face incredulously—only too well, she thought that she knew.

'I'll tell ye then—it was this wye,' Uncle Geordie went on.

'It was late in the gloamin' an' you were in yer bed, when the wee fairy folk came doon the glen—there must hae been near about a hunder o' them, a' in green ye ken, an' awfae wee, wi' gold croons on them. Weel they saw Lambie oot bye feedin', an' ane o' them jumpit on til her back, an' they a' clappit their hands an' made sic a noise that Lambie ran off up the road, awa up the glen miles an' miles. Syne they were that pleased wi' Lambie they thocht tae keep her, sae they jist caught an awfae beast they caed Buckie an' drove her down the glen tae the door, an' there she was in the mornin' when ye wakened up.'

'An' Lambie's wi' the fairies then?' Mysie asked, her sobs already a thing of the past.

'Aye is she: eatin' fine bits o' green grass an' wee flowers, an' made a deal o' by them a'.'

'An' the butcher didna'. . . Mysie's voice shook.

'No he: the fairies dinna hae butchers. See, Mysie, here's a gran' conversation lozenge for ye, an' Mither's tae pit ye til yer bed again.'

Mysie slipped down off his knee, grasped the conversation lozenge, and pattered off contentedly to bed: in her young mind Buckie the tyrant was dead and gone, and her wee white lamb was alive and happy forever among the fairies.

## O-TSUNE-CHAN:

## A GLIMPSE OF JAPANESE HOME LIFE.

' I AM seriously ill, and realise that my end is near. I always regret that I was not at home when you left Japan and could not bid you farewell. I have been looking forward with much pleasure to your return. But I can wait for you no longer. It grieves me much to go away without seeing you, but this cannot be helped. Good-bye.

' To Ken Sama.

From Tsune.'

A few weeks after I had received this farewell letter the news came from home that my sister was dead. I was intending to sail for Japan last March, but I was too ill myself to risk the long voyage, and thus the opportunity of meeting her is lost for ever.

My mother was the happy and proud mother of five sons and three daughters, till one of them was snatched away from her. Their names are :

Gin (Wealth or Silver); Hikaru or Mitsu (Light); Mata (Also or Again); Saiwai or Ko, eldest sister (Happiness); Toku (Virtue); Tsune, my second sister (Eternity); Ken (Health); Ai, my younger sister (Love).

My third brother's name is a somewhat queer one. I was told that it was my father's exclamation when the birth of the son was announced, ' Mata? ' ( ' Is it a boy again? ' ). Thus the name Mata or Again was given to him. Once my mother composed a poem with the names of her eight children :

Tano-shi-ki-wa,  
Gin to Hikari to,  
Mata Saiwai to,  
Toku to Ken-go to,  
Tsune ni Ai nari.

Blessed is the mother,  
Who has *Wealth, Light,*  
And *Also Happiness,*  
*Virtue, Health and Eternal Love.*

Among these many brothers and sisters I was most attached to O-Tsune-chan, who was but two years my senior. She was

my playmate, companion, and teacher, and we were seldom separated as children. As long as my father was the prominent business man in Yokohama she was O-jio-san (Honourable young mistress), and I O-botsu-chan (Honourable young master). We had beautiful and gorgeous kimono and all sorts of toys. We used to attend our school in a gilt jinrikisha, followed by our servants. But when my father had lost all his fortune and was obliged to retire to his country estate to live with his eldest son, we younger children followed our parents, while the three elder children remained in Yokohama to complete their education. At my eldest brother's home we were no longer O-jio-san or O-botsu-chan, but simply O-Tsune-chan (Little Miss Tsune) and Ken-chan (Little Master Ken). We had no more jinrikisha of our own. We had to attend a small school with a thatched roof, going on foot and carrying our books and slates on our shoulders like all other children. We were teased by our school-mates, for we who had never been outside Yokohama or Tokio before could not understand their provincial dialect. We were laughed at for walking together. It must have seemed very ridiculous to them to see a boy walking with a girl. But we did not mind what these country children said about us. We did our best in our studies till she became the head of her class and I of mine.

Just as she stood firmly by my side at the school, so she was my ally at home, where I found a formidable rival in the person of my nephew, who was two years my junior. He was a healthy, fat, and lovable child, and everybody loved this little heir of the house. He and I used to have competitions in writing Chinese ideographs. My elder brother, Toku-chan, was the judge, and his decision was always in favour of my nephew. I became very dissatisfied with his decisions, and I brought our writings to O-Tsune-chan, who was quite ready to give much better marks for my writing than that of my rival. Then my nephew challenged me to wrestle with him. Although I was born in the year of Tiger, and my name means health and strength, nevertheless I was but a delicate child, while my nephew, who was born in Dragon's year, was an athletic boy. I was beaten by him again and again, in spite of my tricks. Then my sister-in-law, the mother of the conqueror, came to the rescue. She snatched away the boy and punished him for his lack of respect toward his august uncle! Then I became

sorry for him. (A Japanese wife is not only obedient to her husband and her parents-in-law, but also she pays high respect to the brothers and sisters of her husband, however young they may be. They are called 'Kojiuto,' or little parents-in-law, for they are often terrors to a young wife.)

My brother Toku-chan was a born artist. He used to make beautiful kites adorned with pictures of warriors. Once—it was at the boys' festival day in May—he made two kites, one for my nephew, the other for me. The picture on my nephew's kite was Kusunoki-Masashige, the greatest patriot of our history, while that on mine was Ashikaga-Takauji, who had in ancient time usurped the Mikado's power. I was so unhappy and angry that I tore it into pieces. Not content with this, I made a big hole in my brother's large square kite. I was justly punished by my brother for this outrage, and could not console myself till O-Tsune-chan promised to buy me a kite with the picture of Momotaro, the greatest hero of Japanese children.

When O-Tsune-chan was still very young she learned to play the 'Samisen' (a musical instrument). She learned also 'Chanoyu' (tea ceremony), and 'Hana-ike' (flower arrangement), in which she excelled. She was so skilful in this that her teacher gave her a part of his name to be used as her nickname, or *nom de plume*, as it were. In Japan it is the custom for an artist to give a part of his name to his best pupil. For instance, the best pupil of Toyokuni is called Kunisada. I well remember how beautifully and gracefully did she arrange seven branches of sakura, or cherry, to insert into a metallic vase on the girls' festival, which begins on the third of March. But for her the chief pleasure on the festival days was, of course, her small dolls, which were carefully put away all the year and only brought out on the three days in March. They are real works of art, and were brought by my mother as part of her dowry when she married my father. The set represented the Emperor, the Empress, two ministers of State, five court musicians, the old man of Takasago and his wife, all dressed in the fashion of ancient times. Beside these there were all sorts of lacquered furniture and china ornaments of very minute size, and a small screen beautifully inlaid with shells. This screen was to stand behind the Emperor and Empress. As I write this I feel as if I were taken back to our old home, and seem to see the happy mother and sisters taking out the dolls from small

cases one by one, to place them on shelves rising one above the other and covered with red damask.

The great day for me was the fifth of May, the boys' festival day, in which hundreds of paper koi, or carp, fly upon the roof of houses in the village where there are little boys. On that day, O-Tsune-chan helped me to decorate the children's room with models of great warriors, clad in shining armour and riding on spirited chargers. The most distinguished of these warriors were Empress Jingo, who was the first to subdue Corea; Take-nouchi-no-sukune, her chief general; Hachiman-Taro, the conqueror of the Highlands of Japan; Hideyoshi, the military chief who rose from a peasant and became the regent of a Mikado; and Kato-Kiyomasa, his marshal, who conducted his oversea expedition through Korea. How delighted I was to hear stories of these heroes from my sister, who was an excellent story-teller! Not only could she tell stories of Japanese, but she also told us of European heroes. We heard from her of great explorers such as Drake, and Livingstone, and Stanley, but my favourite hero as a boy was Robinson Crusoe. I wondered at her knowledge, and my admiration was not lessened when in later years I learnt that my greatest hero was a myth.

There were many other festivals on which we amused ourselves. There was the festival of the War God, Hachiman, at which all young men of our village joined in manly sports, which were held in the ground of the temple of Hachiman. There was 'Gion Matsuri,' the festival of harvest, when my sister and I went up to a city near by to see a carnival procession. My sister, who was more careful with her pocket-money, bought me picture-books or toys from some of the small shops which lined both sides of the main street on that festival day. Then there was 'Bon Matsuri,' the Festival of the Dead, when even the hardest master gives three days' holidays to his apprentices. Although it is the memorial day of the dead, yet the day is one of the merriest for children. I was told that the dead return to their old homes on that day and remain there for three days to share in the merrymakings of the living. We used to watch fireworks or 'Bon odori,' the special dance for the festivals. One of our duties on that day was to go to our ancestral graveyard high up on a hill, carrying branches of sakaki and flowers. On each of the tombs is inscribed the

Kaimio. Kaimio is the name given by a priest to the departed, and is chosen by him as representing the supposed character of the dead person. Usually the higher the rank of the defunct the longer the name. As the names which are inscribed in the different tombs are not the names which people had borne in their lifetime, we often failed to identify the grave. I could hardly pronounce the Kaimios of my grandparents, for they were of tremendous length.

Beside these festivals there was Doyoboshi, 'the day of airing,' on which day all the beautiful ceremonial kimonos and armour worn by our ancestors were exhibited in the house. We were not allowed to see them on other days in the year excepting the 'day of airing.' How delighted O-Tsune-chan was when she was permitted to handle the wedding kimono of her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. How proud I was when my sister put a shining helmet on my head and dressed me up in the armour, though I could hardly move with it. There were numerous swords, each of which had some interesting records. There was a Nagamaki, a tremendous sword made by my grandfather to join the Holy War of 1850. There was a helmet with the crest of bluebell given by our ancient feudal lord. With reverence and pride we listened to the records of our ancestors from our mother. No other day had given us so much opportunity to learn our family history as the Doyoboshi day.

When I was about ten years old my parents became Christians. One of my brothers, 'Light,' had become a minister before this time, in spite of our parents' bitter opposition. But before long his earnestness and eloquence brought all of us into the same fold. Soon afterwards another brother, 'Again,' took up the pastoral work, following in the steps of his elder brother. After we became Christians we did not take part in many of the Buddhist and Shinto festivals. We had many disagreeable experiences at our school on account of our new faith.

Our province is the centre of the silk industry, on which the livelihood of the farmers mainly depends. There was a patron goddess of silkworms dwelling among the heights of Mitsumine mountain, whence one can see the snowy peak of the sacred mountain, Fuji, on a clear day. There were schools which were entirely devoted to instruction in silkworm culture. Even in



the primary school where we attended the physiology and hygiene of the silkworm were taught. Our school was closed during the silkworm season, so that we could give our little help to our elders.

When I was about thirteen years of age—our parents and their three youngest children lived in a cottage not very far from our eldest brother's home at that time—my sister and I were told that we should earn our pocket-money by the culture of silkworms, and mother gave us thousands of tiny worms. We had to give them mulberry leaves day and night at regular intervals of about four hours. We had to change the straw mats on which the worms were placed every day. The temperature of the room had to be regulated by straw fire. It is impossible to describe all the attention which we had to bestow on them to make them spin perfect cocoons. (The most favoured shape for a cocoon is a kind of figure of eight, which is preferred to the spherical or oval, and the silk should be of an ivory-white colour.) The task was too heavy for me, and I could not get up at midnight. But my sister was always willing to attend my silkworms as well as her own. And when many of my silkworms died through my carelessness in over-feeding them, my sister gave me some of hers. In the end we realised one 'To' of cocoons (about three thousand cocoons), which was bought by our father at about three yen.

My sister soon became an expert in the silkworm culture. The cocoons which she sent to a village exhibition were much praised. As soon as she had finished her grammar school course she began to learn to wind the silk from the cocoons and also to weave it. Every day when I came back from school I found her either sewing kimono or winding silk fibres. How quickly would she wind the silk from the cocoon into a skein. Often I found her singing some country ditties while she was thus employed. She was quite countrified at this time, and we could talk our provincial dialect and sing country ballads as well as anybody else. She had to learn weaving from an instructor of weaving whom father had hired for her. I loved to watch her weave broad silk called 'habutae,' for the rapidity in which the shuttle passed right and left across the warp was interesting to me. I often tried weaving, but never succeeded in doing more than an inch at a time.

Beside these she had to make many kimono. Our eldest

sister was at college, while all our other brothers, excepting the eldest, had not married. So the burden to weave cloth and make kimono for so many brothers and sisters fell on the shoulders of my mother and O-Tsune-chan. In this country one can get dresses or suits at a draper's or outfitter's, but in Japan they are all home-made. It was not an easy task for a girl to make many kimono, 'Futon' (cushions used for beds), 'yogi' (bed-covers), 'tabi' (socks), etc. But O-Tsune-chan was always fond of domestic work, just as her elder sister is a born scholar. Untiringly and cheerfully did she work day by day.

At this time our artist brother, Toku-chan, left home and went to Tokio to prepare for college like his elder brothers and his eldest sister. I began to fear that O-Tsune-chan, too, would soon be taken away from me after all. But her turn did not come while I lived in Japan. She was too happy with her parents, her little brother and sister, to leave the country. Perhaps she wanted to study at Tokio and to enjoy city life, for who would not like to have a little change? But she knew that our parents were getting older and needed all her loving attention and care. Day after day I saw her busy herself in preparing nice dishes for her parents. Night after night I found her giving massage to her parents in turn. Morning after morning I noticed her arranging her little sister's hair. She had very little time to spare for her music, or flower arrangement, especially when all our brothers and sister came back from school during the summer holidays. I and my younger sister had plenty of fun with them. But poor O-Tsune-chan, she was too busy cooking and providing for them to share our fun. Once our brothers and sister came home with their American friends. It was no easy matter to accommodate European or American guests at a remote country home. My sister O-Tsune-chan did her best, however, to please them, and while I was following them here and there with curiosity, O-Tsune-chan busied herself in the kitchen. I listened to the animated English conversation between our American guests and my brothers or sister. For the first time, I became jealous of my brother's attainment. I asked them to teach me English, but their holidays were soon over and they returned to school. I began to think myself unfortunate to live in the country. Finally I conceived the idea to leave the country where

O-Tsune-chan and I had spent many happy years together. O-Tsune-chan grieved much at seeing me so discontented, but she thought that it was better for me to carve my fortune in the great world than to remain in the country, and she did her best to make me realise my ambitions.

When I left home, O-Tsune-chan was not yet twenty. But I knew that there was coming and going of 'Nakodo,' or match-makers, and I thought that she would soon be married. But she had no heart to leave the home at that time, as our father had been an invalid for many years. She remained single while he lived, and nursed him as a faithful daughter should till he breathed his last.

When I was in America I learned that she had married an engineer. I know but little of her married life, for since I left Japan I have never returned home. Was her married life happy? Yes, what else could I think! Every letter which she wrote me told me that she was a happy wife and mother. In one of her very last letters she said to me, 'Do not forget that I have always been happy, though short my life may be.'

Since she has passed away I have often dreamt of her. To me the departed appear in dreams more frequently than the living. I dreamed that I was lying on 'futon' at my old home. My eldest sister was reading my favourite book while my younger sister was arranging chrysanthemum flowers at my bed-side. But O-Tsune-chan was not there. I called her name, O-Tsune-chan, O-Tsune-chan. Then 'shoji,' the paper slide, slowly opened, and she stepped gently into the room and sat by my side. She looked pale and feeble. She told me that she was going away, and that it grieved her much to depart before my health was restored, so that she could nurse me no more. I raised myself from bed and stretched out my hand to touch hers. But she was no longer there. I awoke.

Yes, my dear sister is dead, the sister whose devotion meant so much when I was a child and whose sympathy has strengthened me ever since I became an invalid.

KEN HOSHINO.

### *THE CHARM OF LOUISE.*

It was three years to a day since the Professor's wife had left him. Dixon, his servant, a sentimental creature at heart, was acutely conscious of the date, but it was doubtful if the Professor himself associated any fact at all with the seventh of March. No sane person could call Professor Caxon a sentimentalist. The undue amount of electricity in the air was probably responsible for the fact that, for once in a way, he was distinctly restless that evening.

It was certainly very sultry. The air was entirely still. Thick, blue-black, lowering clouds were banked in the western sky. The whole world seemed to be waiting for the storm to break. And the Professor of History paced his wide study with an unusual distaste for peaceful work in his heart.

He was a tall lean man with a long ascetic face. Its note was impassivity. The grey, deep-set eyes seemed incapable of passion, although it was quite conceivable that they might be stern. High forehead, thin, peaked nose, long upper lip and craggy chin all added adroitly to the general suggestion of ruled and rigid calm. His hands were capable and finely shaped. He gave them more attention than he spared to his garments. Not that he was ever slovenly. Dixon, who adored and feared him, saw to that. But the Professor did have a weakness for mellowed age in his clothes. Dixon would have told you that it was the one weakness his master possessed.

His restless pacing ended finally at his great desk. Some of its drawers he had not opened for years. He drew out one of them at random in search of an old notebook which, he fancied, contained an entry of value. The notebook was not there. The drawer held only a woman's glove and the miniature of a woman's face.

As he looked down upon them the Professor's own face did not alter. He was not given to changes of countenance. His mouth was always tight. But his grey eyes narrowed a trifle and seemed to darken. He half turned away, and then with a slight shrug of his shoulders he picked up the miniature and the slender glove.

He was marvelling that these relics of his wife had escaped his notice at the time when he had been bent upon erasing all traces of her past presence in his house. When she left him he had made no outward sign at all of grief or hurt. It had seemed to be his whim to treat his life as a book from whose pages one or two, of little enough importance, had been torn. That had been all. Dixon and others had marvelled at his frigid calm, but he was not a man who encouraged sympathy or intimate speech. It had seemed that the pages had been torn out with deft thoroughness, and yet all the while these—trifles had been lying in his drawer. He held the miniature up to the light.

The pictured face would have arrested any man's eyes. Its clear healthy pallor was made more striking by the vivid scarlet of the lips. The eyes were darkest violet under a low white forehead. The chiselling of the straight fine nose and curving chin was perfect. The whole face was perfect, yet with something lacking or something in excess. Only a trifle, but it lay like a shadow across the wonder of its loveliness. What did it lack, that face? Pity or tenderness or faith? Or what did it suggest that should be lacking? Cruelty or sensuality? If it did, the suggestion was faint enough. But—but perhaps just such a fair face may have peered down unmoved from the high benches to the torn red sand of the Roman circus where white-faced men and women confronted savage beasts for the sake of a shadowy cross.

The pictured face was not more quiet than that of the man who gazed upon it.

'Too little soul, or too much?' he murmured. 'Scarcely the latter, I think. But it was I who failed, Louise. A mountebank had been more to your taste.'

From the delicate glove came a suggestion of faint fragrance. It recalled the past more compellingly than the miniature had power to do. Only once, perhaps, it had been worn, but it retained the semblance of a long-fingered, gracious hand. The Professor twisted it almost savagely between his own long, sinewy fingers.

'Some fools profess to read character from the shape of hands,' he muttered. 'What would they read from this? If outward perfection should argue a perfect soul——?'

He made a quick harsh movement towards the fireplace. Then he checked himself, smiling faintly and sourly.

'I question only if they are worth the burning!' he mur-

mured. But he dropped the miniature and the glove upon the blazing coals.

Ten minutes later he rang the bell and bade Dixon bring him a hat and a light coat.

'Are you going out, sir?' Dixon ventured. 'The storm is near to breaking.'

'Yes, yes!' the Professor answered impatiently. 'But this house is stifling!'

And Dixon knew of old how idle was argument. The Professor's will, in trifles or great things, was like a crag of gritty granite. 'Only knowed one other as obstinate,' observed Dixon to himself, as he watched from the window the tall figure of his master striding up the road. 'And that was the—the mistress. Like steel meeting steel it were, after he gave up giving her her way. But he—he was ready to—to kiss her feet, as you might say, for long enough. Wonder why she tired of him? But it don't pay for any woman to be as good-looking as her. It ain't safe—it stands to reason that it ain't safe!' And Dixon, with a certain resigned gratitude, reflected upon the natural safeguards with which his own worthy wife was fenced from peril.

The storm broke fairly when the Professor had reached open country beyond the spreading tentacles of the suburb. It began with a long clattering peal and a flash that seemed to rend the darkling sky. Then came the rain in heavy, leaping lines. The Professor glanced about him, and was aware of a shed in the corner of a field. He climbed a gate and made for it at a run. As he passed through the doorway there came another splitting crash, and while it rumbled away he heard a frightened groan from a dark corner of the shed.

'Who is that?' asked the Professor quickly.

A man raised his dishevelled head. Apparently he had been burrowing beneath a heap of mouldy hay. His face glimmered white and haggard from the shadows. His teeth were clicking quite audibly.

'Who is it? Who is it?' he shrieked shrilly. There was a note of utter fear, like that of a hysterical woman, in his voice. He peered under his hands at the Professor, and gave almost a sob of relief.

'Ah, it's a man! Thank God, thank God!' he muttered.

'Who did you think I was?' Professor Caxon asked.

'I didn't know. One sees queer things. . . . It's the storm

—the beastly thunder and lightning! It always takes me like this—now.'

'Your nerves are in a bad way,' the Professor remarked coolly. He seated himself upon an old harrow, and drew out his pipe and pouch. The stranger seemed to try to pull himself together.

'I shall be better now you've come. I sheltered here a little while ago, and it was lonely and dark. . . . Ah!'

The thunder had crashed out again. There had been silence for a few minutes, save for the beating rain. It was as though the storm had waited, gathering its strength for a gigantic effort. Peal after roaring peal bellowed forth, crashing above the very roof of the shed as it seemed. Night was drawing on apace, and it was almost dark in the crazy building, save when the white glare of the lightning tore the gloom. And without ceasing, the rain lashed down.

The Professor, sitting there smoking quietly, saw a strange thing. He saw a man cast off his last shreds of self-respect and lay bare the quivering cowardice of his soul. He saw him roll upon the trodden earth, clutching blindly with his hands, covering his face with filthy hay, striving to shut off from his ears the raving of the thunder. He heard him moan strange, incoherent, pitiful words. At moments he could see his white, straining face and glaring eyes. At first he tried to calm and hearten this broken, cowering man, but soon enough he perceived his efforts to be idle. The heart of the craven was torn by an agony of terror that might not be comforted. And it is not pleasant to see a man discard his armour of self-respect. After a while the Professor turned away his eyes from that moaning heap.

He looked down swiftly at a touch. The man had crawled upon his belly towards him, was clutching his knees, grovelling at his feet.

'I shall die in a storm like this!' he moaned, and his lips were a bluish-white. 'I've always known that I shall die when it thunders! I know it, I know it, I know it!'

'Try to be a man,' the Professor said quietly. 'The electricity affects your nerves. You are in no especial danger.'

The man paid no heed.

'I can't die without telling—I can't, I daren't!' he whined. 'If I passed this moment, there'd be no forgiveness. But if I



confessed to you——. Doesn't it help a man's soul to confess?'

The Professor made a slight movement of distaste.

'I am no priest,' he said coldly. 'I fear I cannot help you.'

The man dropped his head for a moment, almost with relief. And then the thunder blared out once more. The craven raised his white, shrinking face.

'You can hear me!' he shrieked. 'And you've got to hear me, you must, you shall! I *won't* die without confession! I won't be damned for ever and ever! Will you hear me?'

The Professor gazed at him in silence for a moment. Then—'Yes, if you wish, I will hear you,' he answered.

The man drew off from him at once, with a different shade of fear upon his haggard face. He looked towards the doorway, as though he thought of flight. That was in the brief silence between the peals. At the next deafening clap the man turned back once more towards confession. So for a long five minutes he wavered and recoiled. It was after one peculiarly crashing roar that words broke almost involuntarily from his twisting lips.

'I killed a woman!' he cried. 'Oh, my God, I killed a woman on a day like this!'

He glared up with a strange questioning at the Professor's face when he had spoken. That face never quivered, revealed no trace of horror or disgust.

'I have said that I will hear you,' the Professor said calmly.

And then the man told this story, told it in strange broken words, interrupted by the din of the thunder and by his own fits of cowering terror. He told it, crouching there upon the earthen floor. And the Professor listened, seated motionless in the gloom. When the lightning lit for a moment his gaunt, impassive face it seemed to the grovelling murderer to be as coldly lifted above all human emotion as the face of some great white god.

'I'd been straight all my life before. I had—yes, I had. Went to church regularly when I could, when my journeys let me, and never wronged any man knowingly. I travelled for a good firm, and was doing well. I had my temptations, of course. Better-looking than most I was, and the women—some of the women wouldn't leave me alone like. But I kept straight

—I did. Engaged to a decent girl, Annie Robins, I was—her father had a very tidy business in the linendrapery line, and I looked to marry her pretty soon. And then I met *her*—that woman!’

The wretched creature lifted himself upon his knees, and his eyes glittered.

‘God never made another woman like her, to look at! Never, never, never! Oh, my word, my word! Eyes she had like violets in the New Forest, and a red mouth—such a red, red mouth! And her hands—such white, slim hands! I never cared even to touch Annie’s hands any more, after the day I saw her’s first. And her little light feet, and the slow sort of scornful smile she had—that seemed to think nothing of you, to treat you like dirt, and yet made you want to—to kiss her and die kissing her! What did God make a woman like that for, to tempt men and make ’em break their words and their hearts? And other people’s hearts too. They say that Annie’s going into a decline. But I could never have looked at her, after that other one. Even if I wasn’t cursed and broken and haunted like, always, as I am!’

His voice was almost a scream in the last words. The Professor made no sign at all.

‘It was through a motor smash that I came to know her. Outside her own flat it happened. She wasn’t hurt hardly at all, but the others were. They were taken to hospital, and I helped her up to her rooms. No one else came. They were looking after the others. She would have me stay a little while, to thank me properly. Oh, I told you I was good-looking—then. It’s only a little while ago, but—I’m not good-looking now.

‘It came on me all in a moment, my feeling for her. I remember she was taking off her gloves, very slowly and lazily like. I’d never been in such a room before, not furnished so expensively. And I’d never seen such hands as hers. I remember noticing a ring on her finger. The stones caught the fire-light, one big ruby and a diamond. It slipped off, and I picked it up for her. She laughed for some reason, and read out the letters inside. “‘L. from F.,’” she said. “‘Always.’ Well, it wasn’t to be always! Poor F.! I wonder how he’s getting on without me. How he did jar upon my nerves!’”

The Professor spoke for the first time.

“‘L. from F., always,” you said?” he asked measuredly.

The man looked up like a hunted thing.

'Yes. What of it? Do you know——?'

'I know nothing,' the Professor answered gravely. 'Proceed with your tale, if you wish.'

'It came on me then, the feeling. I knew, somehow I knew, that she—she could make me eat my heart out for her, if she pleased. . . . I saw her six times after that first afternoon. Six times! I remember 'em, every one. I could tell you what she wore, and what she said, and how often she smiled. She didn't smile often. Seemed too much trouble like. But it was worth all the more when it came. I worshipped her, from the beginning, from the first second I saw her, I believe. But worship's a poor word. I—I was *possessed*—like they used to say of folks with devils. I—I was besotted on her, some 'ud have said. The—the ground she trod on was different from other grounds. Anything she'd touched or worn. . . . But what's the good of talking? You won't never understand, with that cold sort of face of yours. But I just thought of nothing but her. Food or sleep or my work was nothing to me. My customers and the firm began to notice it pretty quick. But I didn't care. All the time, the long time, I wasn't with her, I was thinking of when I could see her next. . . . There was nothing wrong between us, nothing sinful at all. She was like ice, just like ice. But it—it sort of pleased her to have me worship her and—and spoil everything in my life for her, perhaps. But I'm not sure of that last. I'm not sure if she thought or cared about that. I don't want to do her any wrong. But I was good-looking then, and I think she liked to look at me, a little.'

The storm still raved with unquenched fury. The man had well-nigh forgotten his terrors in his story, but now at a sudden louder peal he shook through all his body and hid his face behind his lean hands.

'Proceed, if you wish,' the Professor said at last. His own pale face was perhaps a shade whiter than usual. Otherwise he seemed unmoved.

'I wanted to marry her, of course. There was nothing else I wanted in heaven or earth. Annie was nothing to me now. I never gave her a thought. Love?—she and I had never known what the word meant. Only that other woman could teach it me. I hadn't much real hope of marrying her, perhaps, but I *had* to try. It was that or going mad. But she would only

smile when I prayed her. I came there the seventh time to ask her once for all. That was—*when I did it!*

Kneeling there with clenched hands he glared up at the grim-faced Professor. For a time his lips worked silently. Without the storm trumpeted and the rain hissed down.

'I've got to tell you—I've got to! It's laid upon me to do it. If I could only forget that afternoon! There was just such a storm as this battering down. My nerves felt all queer and jumpy. She was dressed all in black. Her face looked paler than usual and her lips looked redder. I can still smell the scent she used, faint and sweet, that seemed to go to your head. . . . I told her what I wanted, I prayed her to marry me—on my knees, fair grovelling before her. What did I care? It was her I wanted—nothing else mattered, no silly pride or anything like that! And then she laughed, she laughed, she laughed!'

The man rose up from his knees. A flash of lightning revealed him standing before the Professor, his white face tortured and excited.

'I tell you, she laughed! And I was ready to give up all for her, work and Annie and friends—my religion and my God, if she pleased. And I was on my knees to her. But she could laugh! And she went on laughing. I remember I got up from my knees. Something seemed to be going round and round inside my brain. And then I heard her more clearly again. My ears had stopped buzzing for a moment. She was saying that she was tired of me and my heroics. She wanted me to go away and not come back. "I get tired of everyone in time," she said, lazily like. "I got tired of that cold learned man, my husband. But I've got tired of *you* very quickly indeed!'

'And—I'd been on my knees to her and crying, crying!

'I went mad, then—I tell you I went clean mad! Something crackled up inside my head. I'd never been really angry in my life before. It felt as though there was blood swimming in my eyes. And I don't remember snatching up the poker. But I found it in my hand. . . . It all happened very quick. I hit her three times—my God! Twice after she was down. She didn't cry out. But I believe—I believe she just laughed—once—very faint. And there was blood. . . .

'I *must* have been mad. It seemed to be thundering and lightning all the while without a break. Afterwards I did a queer thing. I raked the burning coals from the fireplace and



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strewed them all over her where she lay so quiet. I had some notion in my head when I did that, but what it was I can't remember clearly now. It wasn't till her dress caught that I had a panic. Then I made one bolt from the room, shutting the door. The servants didn't see me leave the flat. Down in the street I looked up once and saw smoke coming from the window of her room. . . . I believe the house was burnt down. No one ever seemed to know how she died.'

He came to an abrupt pause. The light in the shed was stronger. The storm had swept away as swiftly as it had broken. A pale moon was peering from a rainwashed sky.

'I've told you, I've told you everything quite straight. There was no need for me to tell anyone. Do you think it will count for me, in my favour like——?'

But the Professor did not seem to be listening.

'A ruby and a diamond ring, you said, with "L. from F., always" inside? And there are other things. . . . So that was how Louise died.'

The murderer stiffened, raising his shaking hands.

'Louise? It was her name! What do you mean, what do you mean?'

The Professor's voice was quiet as his face.

'I mean that it was my wife whom you murdered,' he answered.

For a moment only the man stared as at some being beyond his comprehension. Then, with a sound like a high choking sob, he burst through the doorway of the shed and ran blindly, with his head and shoulders bent forward, like a man pursued by devils.

The sound of his feet squelching over the wet turf died away into silence. The Professor sat for very long without movement. When he rose at last and walked stiffly to the doorway the sky was bright and clear, and from soaked grass and earth a fragrance divinely clean and fresh was rising. The Professor spoke aloud, with his eyes upon the white sickle of the moon.

'I wonder whom God blames for this,' he murmured; 'Louise or me or that poor quivering thing?'

JOHN BARNETT.



*LANOE FALCONER.*

NOVELS and short stories shower upon us like snowflakes in a blizzard; many of them excellent in quality, fresh, and amusing; then they pass, to give place to others as good and as ephemeral. What is the secret which enables one here and there to stand out above the crowd and abide the test of time? Why is it that 'Mademoiselle Ixe' is still going into new editions and men and women still grow enthusiastic over 'Cecilia de Noël'? It is such a small sum of achievement, this little handful of volumes, yet good judges believe that the little books will become classics.

When they appeared there seemed every prospect that they would be the heralds of a long line. The brilliant, solid work, the excellence of form, the wealth of observation they displayed, seemed earnest of a deep wellspring; but the hopes raised were never fulfilled, and when Marie Elizabeth Hawker (to give Lanoe Falconer her real name) passed away in June 1908, in fourteen years she had only added one small volume to her writings. Literary work hides many tragedies, and among the saddest must be the discovery that ill-health has blighted the roots of the mind, and that the power of creation has become too fierce an effort for the delicate organisation. Little was known of Marie Hawker in her lifetime outside her immediate circle of friends, but these recollect her as a unique personality; in her was united the most brimming humour with a sensitive and pathetic melancholy. In her youth she was a creature running over with fun and high spirits; there lies before me the MS. of a family chronicle such as many households of young people have produced. The laughter in it is so fresh and gay that one is carried along from page to page of the small, neat handwriting, by an irresistible tide of drollery. From the grandiloquent leaders, to the paragraphs of 'Mr. Phillip Bosch,' whose task it is to pad corners, a witty turn is given to the most prosaic incidents. The pet dog, a new bonnet—no trifle is too slight to awaken merriment in the young girl in her twenties.

Marie was the granddaughter of Colonel Peter Hawker, whose

'Instructions to young Sportsmen' is still read by those who hunt and shoot for the wisdom it contains, and by other people for the pleasure of its literary quality. Some of her early years were spent with her family in France, and no doubt her mastery of French and the taste she acquired for reading it, had an effect in forming her clear, incisive style. But most of her life was passed in that Hampshire valley which she has described so often and with so loving a touch—a calm, sleepy village, with its church and park and small quiet neighbourhood. Certain advantages she had ; freedom from pecuniary worries among them. Though money was never plentiful the comfortable household had not to think too closely of ways and means. Hurstbourne Park was within a mile of Hurstbourne Priors, where the Hawkers lived, and in Lady Portsmouth and her daughters Marie found her closest and most congenial friends. No one who recalls the wide sympathies, the enthusiastic outlook on life, which distinguished Eveline, Lady Portsmouth, or the cultured personality and delicate incisive judgment of Lady Camilla Wallop (afterwards Lady Camilla Gurdon), will say that this was a superficial factor in her education. Quietly as she lived, she saw English society at its best, and the shades of difference with which she draws the county lady, the vicar's wife, or the fashionable butterfly, were the fruit of experience thoroughly imbibed.

It is surprising to find that she was past forty before anything beyond a few magazine articles appeared from her pen, but her work when it appeared was no product of chance. From very early days she studied her craft closely. She read and wrote and pruned and polished. Volumes of MS. books, filled with extracts and criticisms, bear witness to an industry that never flagged. One of these chronicles the weather from day to day, the changes of the sky, the winter fields, the hot summer evening ; another reports snatches of conversation verbatim, or records the feelings with which she looked on the face of a dead villager or took part in the humours of a parish meeting. She worked on for her own satisfaction, developing a higher ideal and greater finish of execution ; but though she had a wish to write, she had no connexions with the literary world and no one to urge her to any strong effort. When she wrote 'Mademoiselle Ixe' she had never even known a Russian. A strain of music first awoke the keen sympathy which inspired the story. Marie Hawker's own music was very remarkable. She

had not only an excellent and practised technique, but she possessed in marked degree the power of arousing feeling by her playing. She heard a Russian air played upon the zither. She describes it in 'Mademoiselle Ixe.' 'The spirit thus revealed was anguish that cannot rest, torment that sees no outlet on earth, no comfort in heaven, the shadow of an unrighteous and pitiless dominion in which the hope of generations has faded, and their faith had waxed dim.' How terrible, she felt, must be the national experience of which such a Volkslied was the outcome. It sent her to the writings of Turgenieff and Stepniak. In her diaries still lie newspaper cuttings with descriptions of barbarities practised upon Russian prisoners. The Liberal principles which were hers by tradition expressed also the bent of her nature, and it was out of the fulness of her heart that this chord evoked by 'la grande et triste symphonie de la terre russe' was sounded from the peace and safety of her happy English home.

The novel was of an awkward length; and for this reason, and also because she had no knowledge of how to set her wares before publishers, it was long in meeting with a welcome. A letter lies before me in which a writer who is still one of our foremost critics declares that 'Mademoiselle Ixe' will not suit anyone he knows. 'She is too violent a lady. It is not the style but the substance that goes against it.' The appearance of the manuscript itself, as it travelled to one publishing firm after another, growing brown and tattered, was enough to condemn it.

'And yet,' she would say to that sister who was her dearest confidant, '*I feel it is good*'; and when at last hope was almost crushed, it was not so much the failure of her story that vexed her, as the fear that perhaps, after all, her judgment and her perception were radically at fault. 'I will send it once more,' she said, 'and that shall be the last time.' It went to Mr. Fisher Unwin, who recognised the intense vitality of its character-drawing, and would not risk injuring it by having it lengthened. He was inspired to create an issue to suit it. In the year 1890 it augurated the 'Pseudonym Library,' and seldom has a publisher's foresight been more amply rewarded. The pseudonym behind which Marie Hawker sheltered herself was derived from her father's name, Lanoe, while Falconer is, of course, a paraphrase of the family name.

The appearance of the little volume was awaited with

chastened expectations, but its success was instant. The reviews were almost unanimous in its favour, but the public seemed even before the reviews. Mr. Gladstone was among the first to recognise its merits, and his appreciation, expressed in print, called immediate attention to it. Everyone was reading it, asking for it at the libraries, buying it, waiting impatiently while fresh impressions were being printed. 'People on all sides are telling me to read her,' writes Lady Camilla Gurdon, 'my book-sellers delaying till yesterday afternoon to send her to me, because she was out of print. It is so pleasant to think of your book being snatched up and read by everyone as it ought to be. I cannot tell you what a delight your success is to me. . . . The description of my darling Hurstbourne went straight to my heart and gave me a thrill of *heimweh*.'

An old friend writes: 'It recalls a wonderful letter that you wrote to me when you were a child, of a journey you took. . . . You described so vividly and minutely the incidents that happened, that I kept it *for years*.'

The welcome accorded to 'Mademoiselle Ixe' was received with exultation and delight by Marie's devoted family, and with unaffected pleasure and relief by herself. Two things she most coveted were granted her—French and Russian recognition. Madame Darmesteter sent her a warm message of praise from M. Taine, and afterwards wrote again to assure her that if she came to Paris she would be received with great pleasure by the many persons already familiar with 'Mademoiselle Ixe,' and find herself at once in the midst of all that was choicest in the world of letters. The Russian tribute came in a different form: a friend sent her a copy which had been recovered from the censor's hands; page after page was blacked out, and finally the word that showed it was tabooed was scored across the whole volume.

'Here,' says Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in reviewing the book, 'we have a new writer filled with love of her fellow-beings.' To him the earlier pages stand so much on the level of ordinary life that the catastrophe does not come into the same plane; but we submit that that is just what this kind of tragedy involves. In one moment all the bright domestic life is shattered by a pistol-shot, and from the rooted calm of the English household and its gaieties we come face to face with the deep despair of a nation. The only thing we cannot believe is that such a capable cool-headed person as Mrs. Merriman's Russian

governess would not have killed her man. It is a book one cannot read without a sense of its power and reserve force; so many qualities are shut in so small a space, the humour and pathos never fail to move, however often one reads it. We recognise its exquisite workmanship and its outlook on life, so quiet, so stern, yet tender. What a cipher, what a puppet the young girl of the story would have remained in many hands! But here Evelyn, with her true, pure, fearless character, deepening under the influence of a sterner nature and of an insight into the tragedy of life, convinces us perhaps more than anything in the book of its author's genuine creative power.

Before 'Mademoiselle Ixe' appeared, the book which Marie Hawker called 'her own child,' 'Cecilia de Noël,' was already in the hands of Messrs. Macmillan, placed there by Miss Gertrude Ireland Blackburne, who, upon the MS. being shown her by Miss Hawker, exclaimed at once, 'This is pure gold.' The head of the house of Macmillan was not behind her in his appreciation. 'There is no question,' he writes, 'of the talent of the book. Whether the public will recognise it as quickly as it should do, I do not feel certain; but if they fail to do so it will be to their own blame and no fault of the book itself.' The public did not fail, and 'Cecilia de Noël' very much enhanced Marie Hawker's position. It was not so instantly popular as its predecessor. It was less light and needed closer application to appreciate, but the discussion and interest it aroused were widespread and lasting. It is, it will be remembered, a tale of a few days spent in a country house which is haunted by a very terrible ghost which impresses those who see it as being 'a lost soul.' The book tells the impression the ghost made on seven different people. Out of deference to the author's admirable handling we find ourselves assenting to the ghost. She never attempts to explain it; in fact, we are left in some doubt as to whether there is really any ghost at all, or if the frank unbeliever in the story is right when he asserts that it only appeared to those people who were expecting to see it. For the interest does not lie in the ghost, but in the effect it produces on one after another of the people it visits. With a satire that is always easy, kindly, and in the best sense urbane—a satire that does not mar, but rather emphasises the tenderness of feeling—you are let into the religious and non-religious conceptions of these characters, and so you get Atherley's gospel and Mrs. Moly-

neux's gospel and Canon Verdane's gospel and the rest, till you come to the gospel of Cecilia de Noël herself. The scientist, the sceptic, the evangelical, the sleek self-confident cleric, the ascetic young ritualist, the fine-lady faddist—all see the ghost in turn, and all in turn have their complacency shaken, their rags torn from them, their dread of the unseen emphasised; yet no one, neither priest nor layman nor woman, is inspired with any spark of pity for a kindred spirit doomed to everlasting woe. In each case the visionary thinks only of his own soul and of guarding or rescuing it. It is not till Cecilia appears on the scene that the attitude is changed. What if the spirit came longing for help and forgiveness? How earnestly she prayed that if it appeared to her she might forget all selfish fear and have strength and wisdom to give it help. 'If the last chapter does not take the reader by the throat,' says one of its reviewers, 'I am inclined to pity him.'

'An almost flawless gem,' the editor of the 'New Review' writes to her. 'Perfect alike in conception and realisation. I have rarely read anything in which the sentiment is so deep and true without being mawkish. It is welling over with the best spirit of the age.' 'You have not written a ghost story,' writes a friend, 'but a story which is a ghost in itself. Not the actions of men and women, but their spirits moving about in worlds not realised, form the theme, and one can trace the ignorance, incredulity, awe, and hope with which they severally turn to the unseen.' 'Mr. H. was here last night,' writes Lady Camilla. 'He has been reading "Cecilia," and he said, "That book has been a baptism to me." I told him of your having said it contained your gospel and was the message you had to give to the world, and he said, "Yes; the book is just that—a message to the world."'

Mr. R. H. Hutton (can he be the Mr. H. mentioned?), Canon Ainsworth, and many preachers, took it as a book to be thought over, illustrating how all revelation is a manifestation of Personality—the veiled truth; that in love, spirit speaks to spirit, man speaks to man; but how account for that love in man? How account for that other Love that is able to speak to and relieve the sorrow of the world? The following letter from Mr. J. H. Shorthouse, author of 'John Inglesant,' is among her papers:

May 14, 1892.

As I sat in the cathedral (Salisbury), this morning, my mind was full of consoling certainty that the veil that separates Freethought and Revelation is of the thinnest texture, and would vanish utterly away but for the miserable faculty we have of misunderstanding one another, and the still

more appalling determination, so common among so-called religious people, that, having received the unspeakable gift themselves, God shall not manifest Himself to any other man in any other way.

I think Faith cannot be defined as anything belonging to mere assent in a dogma or submission to authority. Faith *must* relate to *Idea*. This is the ideal truth which underlies the dogma and gives it its power and vitality. Two considerations seem to me to follow from this statement—

1st, That it is a certain fact that in all history the source of *Faith* (so defined) is *Free Thought*. This was most strikingly the case in the history of the Founder of Christianity.

2nd, There is not a single dogma of Christianity, however strange and wild it may appear, but has some germ and basis of the true idea. Take Eternal Punishment, for instance, as perhaps the most extreme. This seems nothing but a somewhat popular way of stating the undoubted fact of the pitiless sequence of conditional existence. Take the Trinity again . . . the Christian doctrine of the Eternal Son, seemingly so strange, is nothing but the Platonic doctrine of the Idea and Personality existing in the mind of God.

Then with regard to your own beautiful words and pleading for the sympathy of Humanity. We must remember Who it was who said, 'This is the first and great commandment, to love God; and the second is like unto it: to love thy neighbour as thyself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law of the Universe and all the Insight of the Seers. And the Same who said this was the first who in the whole world's history reclaimed by *kindness* a woman who was a sinner.

Is there no allegiance due in the day of conflicting voices to such a Teacher as this?

The deep and touching sentiment, the speculative discussions which form the basis of the book, are lit up and relieved by the humour which plays all through it. It is a humour which is almost too elusive for quotation. Miss Hawker's personages have nothing to say in epigrams; they are not the sort of people who know themselves to be amusing and have to live up to a reputation for saying smart things; nor are they observed and described with anything verging on the spiteful—perhaps the commonest fault in woman's wit. Her work has the inevitable quality: it represents everyday people as seen by a humorously attentive eye, and it has all the breadth and geniality characteristic of true humour. Charming, prosaic Lady Atherley, only aroused by the alarming tirade of her Low Church neighbour against the Romish tendencies of the new curate, into a speculation as to whether he is an Austen or Rood Austen, in which case he ought to be asked to dinner, or placidly looking up from her knitting to beg another high-flown guest to defer her drastic strictures on the Christian faith because the servants are just bringing in coffee and 'might think it odd,' is near akin to Lady Bertram with her 'do not act



anything improper, my dears—Sir Thomas would not like it'; and the Canon and Lucinda and Mr. Mostyn and the children and Atherley himself, 'a man's man,' as he has been called, stand with the vicar's wife in 'Mademoiselle Ixe,' and with Colonel and Mrs. Graham in the 'Violin Obligato,' all drawn with such light touches, always in the right place.

Mr. Fisher Unwin soon brought out 'The Hotel D'Angleterre and other stories,' a collection which well maintained the writer's reputation; in fact, some people think the 'Violin Obligato' is the best thing she ever wrote. It is full of delicate shades of feeling; the love affair of the commonplace, superficial couple, acting with such reflected force upon the sensitive nature of the one who only looks on, is told with a delightful mingling of pathos and drollery.

'What I am longing for is that you should publish some of those stories of old Hampshire folk which you tell so inimitably,' writes Lady Camilla Gurdon, and later on appeared the tiny volume of 'Old Hampshire Vignettes,' so slight, yet 'bringing,' as her friend says, 'the sound and the scent of the water-meadows and the vision of the beloved county and its people as nothing else and, above all, no one else could do.' Her grip on her characters is very tight, and not only those who knew and loved the scenes she describes realised the actors in them as living men and women.

Fame and recompense seemed within her grasp. From all quarters came requests for stories. From America an offer of 250*l.* for a short story to be published in an exclusive series, which included such names as Kipling, Barrie, and Marion Crawford. But it was not to be; health failed rapidly, and with it the power to bring creative work up to that high standard she had always before her. From the age of nineteen she had suffered from internal catarrh, and as time went on she became the prey of a distressing form of dyspepsia. Yet she continued to write; she has left a whole volume of ideas for short stories—diaries which describe life from day to day and afford a subtle analysis of her own feelings and impulses.

There is little record of intercourse with writers of the day, but it is impossible to help smiling, as Marie must have done herself, over a passage with Miss Yonge. In spite of the opinion of the author of the 'Heir of Redcliffe' that it was 'a pity that so fine a book as "Cecilia de Noël"' should be injured by the

entire absence of Christianity,' Marie had been pressed to contribute a story to the Christmas number of the 'Monthly Packet,' Miss Yonge's special organ. The story turned on the happy marriage of an English girl with an Italian—an innocent subject it would appear on the surface, but Miss Yonge, who did not always include a sense of humour among her many distinguished attributes, sets forth the difficulty arising.

I endorsed a strong remonstrance in 'Mothers in Council' against English girls marrying Italians, as representing much misery which the author knew only too well to be the consequence, and to adopt a story where this is the happy conclusion seems to me inconsistent. . . . But that I know that altering does not answer, and that it would destroy the *point* of your tale, I should have liked Margaret six years after to have seen her lover fat and unromantic and the doleful state of an Englishwoman in the Castle by the Sea, and to be very thankful to her good father.

'If Miss Yonge would only carry out her views as to what ought to be the end of the story as explained in her letter to me (exclaims Marie to the editor), it would make an entertaining paragraph. . . . I have never met anyone with so high-pitched a standard.' It seems almost incredible that the story appeared with a footnote disclaiming Miss Yonge's responsibility for its opinions.

We must try to give some idea of Marie Hawker's personality. 'What was she like when she came into a room?' says one of her closest friends, and answers, 'You saw a woman with a plain face, but an attractive face, a slight, undeveloped figure, dressed in an old-maidish way, inappreciative of current fashion.' Her hair was soft and dark, her skin white, her eyes were great, short-sighted grey eyes, full of gleams of light. Her wonderful smile was a very striking trait. She had beautiful teeth, strong, white, and regular. They were her one small vanity, and the consciousness of their perfection seemed to give confidence to her laugh. Her hands, too, were beautiful, and she used them eloquently, when at her ease. That she was badly dressed was often due to the fact that she was employing some failure as dressmaker, to whom no one else would give work. For a whole winter after her home was broken up she lived in one room, to save money to set up a needy workwoman in a business, in which she promptly failed. 'I can see she is all wrong,' Marie would say plaintively, 'she bulges out and goes in at the wrong places.' But in spite of these disadvantages she was extremely dainty and precise in her attire and arrangements,

and her own plain needlework and knitting had the same sort of perfection that marked her writing. There was something Early-Victorian about her consideration and courtesy. Strangers were apt to make her shy and awkward, lionising was distasteful to her, and she was not a success at London parties ; but with those she loved she was gay and expansive. Her speaking face seemed to express her thoughts before her soft sympathetic voice uttered them. She was the best of company, telling a story admirably and writing delightful letters. Her range of interests was very wide. ' Her great pleasure,' says one of her friends, ' was to pass into speculations, social and religious—we often read the same book, in order to discuss it.' Another speaks of the intense impression made by the spirituality of her nature and of the great depth of her character. At one time her tongue and temper were quick, but she gained absolute control over both. With all her keen sense of the ridiculous, her loving sympathy and power of imagination gave her a horror of paining others by sarcasm, and she dreaded anything that verged on the bumptious or dictatorial. She would talk about music, ideas, other people's work, but it was difficult to make her talk about her own. ' Can a person be very reserved and yet very transparent ? ' asks the one who knew her best—' then that was Marie.' Her simplicity and high-minded sincerity shine through every page of her diaries, which she went on with when ill and depressed, sometimes as an outlet, sometimes with the hope that her experience might prove to be of use to others.

She was saved from pessimism by that strong religious feeling which grew more pronounced as years went on, till the spiritual side of life was more real to her than any other. Some would have called her unorthodox, yet she never thought of herself as other than a faithful member of the Church of England. Home life was not without its trials. Her mother had married again while her children were still young, and their stepfather was not altogether an easy person to live with. ' Mr. Dacre ' and ' Colonel Graham ' give us some insight into peculiarities which, only a source of entertainment in high-spirited youth, became irksome to the delicate, overstrung woman. A domineering temper directed against a dearly loved mother, affected the daughter more than it did the wife, who seems to have understood her husband and to have discounted his tiresome ways, after the manner of married people. Her mother's long illness

and death was a time of great suffering ; indeed the sense of loss and bereavement ended only with her own life. The old home was broken up, and, though much time was spent with her married sister, she lived off and on for some time at Winchester. The failure of the digestive organs led to her almost giving up food, and it was no wonder that the doctors pronounced her brain to be 'starved.' 'My brain feels wooden,' she would say. The end was due to rapid consumption. She had put off going to her sister's house till well on into the summer, thinking that Herefordshire would be too cold. When she at length arrived, to her sister's surprise and grief she found herself greeting a dying woman, and a few weeks of utter collapse saw the end. Her last illness was marked by the same tender and courteous consideration for others which had distinguished her life. When taking the food ordered brought on deadly nausea, she would rouse herself to say, 'Here comes my kind nurse, always bringing me something good,' and all the little trials of great weakness were borne with unflinching patience. She was just sixty when she died, but it was difficult not to believe her much younger ; not only was she alert and bright, but her mind and her outlook upon life were so far removed from those of age.

Some of her diary is mournful reading enough, yet not altogether sad, for the brave spirit of faith and patience never fails.

We all have our halcyon days, when we are in tune with the fundamental note—exquisite moments, the *douceurs* of the mystic writers. The rainbow, the dawn, the sunset, and like these the consequence and handiwork of immutable laws.

The art of living successfully with others, like most other arts, depends chiefly on the art of omission. By restricting our words and actions, or let us say words, for actions are of comparatively little importance, the chief offences would be avoided.

The first thing needful is to learn to be quiet. It is the foundation for self-command of all kinds. The first step to speaking well is to know how to keep silent. In this way it comes at last to be the *Ego* itself, and not the body or the temperament which conducts our share of the conversation.

To say the right thing at the right moment, to the right person, is perfection, yet on the lower and more accessible step of *not saying the wrong thing* we may attain to that real courtesy of which popularity is the acknowledgment.

Perhaps she was thinking of the characters in the 'Violin Obligato' when she wrote :

That actual life should be full of idylls, romances, poems, is not so wonderful ; but what surprises me is that the leading *roles* in some of the most moving dramas are often filled by actors so essentially prosaic and common-

place when viewed from close at hand. It is not always the artistic people who play the parts they could appreciate or describe.

The people who watch the spectacle of life are always fewer in number, as modern life leaves less leisure for watching anything, and still fewer the spectators, who not only watch, but discriminate with the admiration of a cultivated taste for so much that the uninitiated neither notice nor appreciate. All these, in nine cases out of ten, must resign themselves to be lonely. They are of the stuff of which are made poets, whether in prose or verse; and though they may not themselves be articulate poets, they bear the penalty of being highly connected, in suffering the inevitable disabilities of their illustrious kin. It is not only in the mechanical arts that special trades have their special ailments.

For the idealist, living wholly with people occupied with the concrete, existence is not merely lonely but fatiguing. It is as though he or she were for ever talking a foreign language. O, the rest, as well as the joy, to be able for a little to speak our native tongue! 'Does she come from my own country?' was Lady G.'s way of putting it to Camilla. Probably Lady G. was of a different type from the writer and came from a different country, but she expressed the same craving for the bent of her own tastes and instincts.

After reading Huxley's life I end with the strong impression of a soul, not perishing, but famished for the Divine. He was one of those who can be satisfied with nothing less. The sadness of this unconfessed craving is to be read in his portrait.<sup>1</sup>

The satirical vein was always there:

After listening to a long account of N.'s elaborate devices to avoid wounding the susceptibilities of her townspeople, one remembered that after all neither *he* nor *she* are very popular. It is one of the innumerable cases where *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*, and where, in fact, one burns the candle with hardly any *jeu*.

A lady caller wishing to convey a sufficient sense of someone's high social distinction, said to us, 'You remember the baccarat scandal? Well, *she was one of the House-Party!*' One can imagine the short story she would have made out of another trivial incident which is headed 'The Hope Luck.' 'Mrs. Hope (junior) leaves box of best hate behind by mistake. Sisters-in-law wear same to Hurlingham. Rain! Destruction! Exclamation of family, "*Just the Hope luck!*"'

Dull people were not the same trial to her that they would have been to a less keenly observant nature, yet she is rather hopeless about them. 'If only they could discern that, besides being miserably sinful, they are also miserably dull, they would at once be raised spiritually and, perhaps incidentally, intellectually also to a much higher level.'

The following gives an idea of the notes she kept of scenes which might afterwards be useful:

Meeting to form a Temperance Society, Jan. 1899. Mr. W. is invited to make financial statement. 'Well, six and something is subscribed at door. Then he had books and cards to order, so sent up 15s. to the Society, but did

[<sup>1</sup> This is an interpretation curiously characteristic of the writer.—ED., CORNHILL.]

not have things to that amount. Then there was the railway journey of the speaker from Andover to Hurstbourne, return—made a note of, but unfortunately lost. (General discussion as to what it would be.) Mr. W. recollects it was not to Andover, but to Gradely. Solemn and significant 'Ah!' as if the difference were enormous. 'Well, then, there were the books, and there ought to be another bill, but I'm afraid I don't know where it is, and I can't make out this.' After puzzling, 'Ah, yes, I see; some of the things were ordered for myself and some for Mrs. P., so you see you add the 3s. 6d. and the six and something, and it is all right.' Vicar (sadly): 'I'm afraid I don't see.'

Unravelling by degrees that we have received 6s. 7d. and spent 5s. 2d. (satisfactory, but probably incorrect). We end with a sally against lethargy of Church from Mrs. P., and regrets that vows taken against intoxicating drinks by young children cannot be made perpetual, 'like baptismal vows.'

The tie which connected mother and daughter was very close. Mrs. Hawker was a woman of the same vivid personality. She shared her daughter's keen sense of humour, and to the end of her life she was full of interest in all the topics of the day. 'I am too ill to laugh now,' she said faintly to Marie during a distressing attack, 'but when I get better I shall describe to you the scene at my inquest.' Looking through Marie's diaries, one gains an insight into what the parting from the beloved companion of all her life meant to the devoted daughter, yet how strongly sorrow called forth her deep feelings of faith and resignation:

The remembrance of our times of most overwhelming grief (she writes in 1904) becomes at last a comfort, because the very depth of the suffering and the love that was its centre imply a depth and height which far transcends the compass of this little commonplace existence. One feels that this dull round of petty cares and occupations and trivial talk cannot be the sequel to that tragedy. No, the curtain has fallen for a time, and on either side we and the departed wait the drama's inconceivable and perfect climax.

There are seasons when the mind is so tense with the aspiration begotten of sadness that it reaches a kind of semi-consciousness of the life beyond and of the Beloved who are there. It is a little like our sub-consciousness of the dear ones who are still on earth and yet invisible and distant. I see only the view from my window with the autumn afternoon deepening over it; I am dimly aware of much wider scenes: and so, too, one is sometimes aware of the existence of the dear dead. They seem to float, like 'Great Intelligences fair,' in some vast firmament, not merely unapproachable, but inconceivable to human sense or fancy, and yet in some way linked to us, like the ether that enfolds the little street where I write, and solar systems that are still undiscovered.

To-day the gentle and kindly minister of the Presbyterian Church spoke of God answering the fervent prayer for souls by saving those souls, as if but for the prayers He would not have done it; in fact, was less merciful and loving than ourselves. The theoretical basis of prayer must be rearranged—perhaps as mere asking it may have to be renounced. In any case, if prayers have any effect, *it cannot be upon God.*

I do pray—i.e. ask for spiritual gifts, for guidance especially—but always with the conviction that I am formulating a desire, stronger, unutterably stronger, in God than in myself, and which He rejoices to see me share.

Revisiting the old home in after years, she recalls lovingly the summer evenings with tea-table spread upon the terrace, or the firelight talks in winter, and then leaning over the churchyard gate, looking towards her mother's grave, she enumerates the old familiar features of the landscapes :

Highest of all in the distance, the Beech Avenue. It is evening, a fine winter evening that makes a poem—a picture. Veil after veil most cunningly drawn over all, through which the copses become soft masses of feathery brown, every tone of brown from that of a withered beech-leaf to the hue of a leafless elm-branch against a pale sky. And purple, dark indigo purple, and the distance painted in cloudy blue. The colour of the meadows is sad green; the streams catch the light and shine like long narrow spears among them. Behind this low-lying picture is a great suspended sweep of sky all suffused with rosy pink.

The mystery, the sadness, the sweetness of it, expressed by colours all subdued except in the sky beyond, is wonderful, only to be attained by winter and eventide together working. The symbol, perhaps, of that old age in which all fierce desires and passions have burnt themselves out, and only the glow of faith remains.

There is one grief about which little is breathed even in her inmost communings. Only here and there a stray word written half involuntarily alludes to the loss of that power of doing creative-work which had been plucked away while she was still tasting all its charm; but at the last, as her mind and her pen dwell on the joy of Heaven, she adds a pathetic sentence—'and then I shall not be sorrowful any more because I cannot write.' She would not let it spoil her life, and even when crushed by sickness and bereavement she was not a sad or gloomy person.

In January 1908 she writes: 'It would seem I shall not die, but live. If it be so, I trust that it may be to serve others, especially younger, less experienced others, in this rough world, in such ways as shall be made plain by that Kindly Light on whose direction more and more implicitly I rely.' But she was not to live, and six months later she was laid to rest in the picturesque little churchyard of Lyonshall in Herefordshire.

EVELYN MARCH PHILLIPPS.



*THE 21st OF JANUARY, 1793 : A LETTER.*

As a pendant to Sir James Yoxall's article of last month, the Editor is moved by a descendant of the writer to publish the following letter written by Colonel W— from Hamburg in 1799 :

I dined yesterday in company with Cléry, late Valet de Chambre to the unfortunate Louis. I am not ashamed to say that his first appearance prejudiced me against him—I found him alone in the salon, all in black, with a stern countenance—large black eyebrows and a swarthy complexion—very athletic, make and manner of the Valet de Chambre—I confess my prejudice went so far as to persuade me that he had been a spy upon the King, and that his good influence with the King's enemies had alone saved a life so obnoxious to Robespierre. I was more confirmed in this opinion when I heard him say that he had been for a long time one of the 1,400 prisoners in the same house, which number he had seen reduced on the guillotine to 300—and that he was in the first room, through which Robespierre's agents passed every day to single out their victims.

But a long conversation that I had with him after dinner entirely dissipated my unjust suspicions, and made me feel ashamed of ever having entertained them. I was then convinced that the horrors of his situation, in his own prison, as well as those of the King's, might naturally have fixed a gloom on his countenance, which even the best heart might not be able to penetrate nor dispel. I asked him if he thought that the King cherished any hope of being rescued by the populace on his way to the scaffold. He said that from the moment of his imprisonment the King seemed to consider that his fate was sealed.

In the course of the evening Cléry came to me to tell me, in confirmation of his answer to my question, that he well remembered that somebody (I think he said the Abbé Edgeworth) since often expressed his happiness at not having suffered himself to raise any such hope in the King, that he himself was possessed for some time with that hope, but determined to say nothing which could shake the King's fortitude by so cruel a disappointment—the circumstances of his studying a few days before his death the conduct of Charles I. in a similar situation is curious. I believe in point of pious resignation they were both on a par. Our Charles I. was certainly, particularly in the presence of his judges, the most kingly—Louis, more of the martyr.

## SIXTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS.

MORE PASSAGES BY THE WAY.

BY HENRY LUCY.

### III.

#### THE SUEZ CANAL DEAL.

IN the narrative of the purchase of the Suez Canal shares given in the January number of the CORNHILL, the origin of the great coup was traced back to a dinner at Mr. Henry Oppenheim's town house in Bruton Street, where Frederick Greenwood was one of the guests. Several interesting communications reaching me fill in the story, and without detracting from Greenwood's active lead in the matter show that Mr. Oppenheim's agency was more important than this casual incident suggests.

Greenwood displaying keen interest in the information—Mr. Oppenheim had learned from his banking house in Paris that the Khedive's shares in the Canal were in the market—his host suggested that he should call upon Lord Derby, place the facts before him, and urge the Foreign Secretary to consult the Prime Minister with the object of stepping in and taking advantage of the opportunity. France was aware of the Khedive's intention and was nibbling at the bait.

Two days later Mr. Oppenheim telegraphed to his intimate personal friend, Nubar Pacha, confidentially informing him that the matter was under the consideration of Mr. Disraeli, and that there was every probability of the price demanded by the Khedive being forthcoming within the course of a few days. Through his Paris house, among whose customers were the Khedive and his Minister, Mr. Oppenheim had also learned of the advances made by the French Government. He begged Nubar Pacha to interrupt communications with Paris for forty-eight hours.

At the end of that time the bargain between Disraeli and the Khedive was completed, and France had occasion to lament afresh the frowardness of *la perfide Albion*.

## IV.

## 'THORNS IN THE CUSHION.'

BEING in Edinburgh for the Midlothian campaign in the winter of 1885 I took the opportunity of consulting Lord Rosebery on the question of accepting the editorship of the 'Daily News,' pressed upon me by Mr. Labouchere and, as related in an earlier volume, more than once declined. 'I congratulate you with all my heart,' he wrote, 'and I commend Labouchere on his discernment and judgment.' Later he wrote again :

Dec. 3rd, 1885, Dalmeny Park, Edinburgh.

MY DEAR LUCY, (I think your kind letter of this morning justifies my familiarity!),—I quite agree that nothing is to be gained or much lost by delay. The new editor should be firmly in the saddle long before Parliament meets. The more I think of it the more I feel convinced that, once your friendly scruple removed, you would never have forgiven yourself if you had refused this chance.

I ventured to tell Mr. Gladstone, under an oath of secrecy, that a change was probable in the guidance of the 'D. N.', but gave him no names. He looked anxious and melancholy on Saturday, and his speeches were less vigorous than usual. I suppose you break off your 'Observer' connexion? Do you assume the reins on New Year's Day?

ROSEBERY.

The 'friendly scruple' alluded to was my disinclination to dispossess of the editorial chair my old chief and friend Frank Hill.

Public announcement of the appointment brought me a sheaf of friendly letters and telegrams. Edmund Yates wrote from Brighton under date January 9, 1886 :

I congratulate you heartily, and am, of course, delighted to see the success of one of my old disciples. If I dare offer advice, I would say, concentrate your energies on the 'D. N.' It is in a parlous state, quâ public opinion, and wants a strong shoulder to the wheel. Keep your leader columns for politics and social subjects, and put Mr. Lang and his clever literary essays into their proper place in the review columns. Abjure leaderettes, which are only diluted pars. The French correspondence has become absolute drivel. There was a notice of 'Maison Delorme' a week or two ago which read like a bold and disjointed translation.

But you know about this better than I do. Again, heartiest congratulations.

Joseph Cowen, of Newcastle, another journalistic expert, was not less frank in his criticism of the paper whose falling fortunes it was vainly hoped I should be able to restore.

I am delighted to learn you are to be editor of the 'Daily News' (he wrote). It is a great position and you are worthy of it. I was always sorry to see you wasting your powers over the gossip of the Lobby. You are capable of bigger and better things. There is now before you a great field of public usefulness and a magnificent opportunity for making great advance in your profession. I know you will apply yourself unsparingly and I am certain you will succeed.

I hope no ill has befallen the late editor. I liked him much. He was a sincere man and an able one.

The 'Daily News' is a good paper and I always read it with interest. But there is a want in it somewhere which is better felt than described. Latterly I have thought it rather too much of a party paper. I am satisfied that a regular party journal can never be an all-round success. I have some very curious information on this point. I don't mean to go to London till the 21st, when I hope to see you well and hearty.

If you can give effect to your old 'Mayfair' programme (minus some of the Society paragraphs, of course), I think you will give the 'Daily News' a new life. It will be a tough job. It is very difficult to get a paper into a new line.

A more personal note was sounded by a veteran journalist at the time editor of the 'Dundee Advertiser':

Let me wish you (he wrote) all success, fame and satisfaction in your new post. I hope that you have chosen wisely. Your old position was unique. You, who are seldom out of London, cannot know how much you influenced political opinion in the provinces. 'Toby, M.P.' taught multitudes of people to know Parliament and its members as they really were, and I think I would rather be Toby than chief director even of the 'Daily News.' I shall miss Toby, but the 'D. N.' will have a new interest. The fear of Mrs. Grundy will no longer be before its eyes.

Kindly apprehension here expressed of missing a particular contribution from the pages of 'Punch' was not justified. In the course of arrangements for my services in a new capacity the

proprietors of the 'Daily News' raised objection to my continuing my connexion with that paper. Here I discerned opportunity of evading a position I did not desire, conditional acceptance of which was agreed to only from a sense of loyalty! I discontinued the 'Cross Bench' article in the 'Observer,' and gave up my London Letter daily telegraphed to a syndicate of morning papers in the provinces. But I was immovable in my determination not to sever my connexion with 'Punch,' and in the end the proprietors yielded.

'I cannot imagine a position in which greater service may be rendered to the party in the country than that you are now to occupy' wrote Sir George Trevelyan. That is true enough; but there is something to be said for the hapless incumbent of office. Before many weeks sped I was brought into close sympathy with the first editor of CORNHILL in the circumstances set forth in the pathetic Roundabout Paper entitled 'Thorns in the Cushion.' On the very threshold of my new career I was confronted by the rupture of the Liberal party following upon the introduction of the first Home Rule Bill. Without counsel or assistance—for the proprietors, themselves divided on the question, offered neither—I had to decide within the space of a few hours whether what was at the time the leading Liberal daily morning paper should stand by the old chief or desert him as others did.

The adhesion of the 'Daily News' to the main body of the Liberal party flying a new flag brought on the head of the editor a stream of raucous contumely. Here is a copy, the only one preserved, of the sort of postcard or letter (the former more popular) found daily on my desk:

London, Jan. 17/86.

So, sir, you still continue to head your leading articles *à la* the Rebel paper 'United Ireland,' and yet I suppose you wish to be thought an Englishman by your subscribers. Shame upon you if you are really English born, but if not, as your championing of Irish Rebels seems to infer, then I say you have no right to conduct what was until your advent a respectable and patriotic paper, but transfer your views to the columns of your co-Rebels' paper above-named, as it has been the machinations of you and such as you that have made Ireland what she is to-day.

A DISGUSTED SUBSCRIBER.

These communications were invariably anonymous, a condition which made safe threats of personal violence.

Another episode that opened the flood-gates of wrath was the case of Sir Charles Dilke, which reached final solution in the courts of law in February, a few weeks after I assumed the editorship. I had known Dilke with increasing friendliness for a dozen years. I heard his historic speech in the House of Commons on the Civil List of 1873, which led to a scene of tumult at that time unparalleled. I watched him win his way from a seat below the gangway to the Treasury Bench and on to the Cabinet. He was in enjoyment of highest esteem, private and public, when suddenly out of the blue there fell the bolt which for years exiled him from public life.

Sir (wrote a member of the House of Commons making holiday abroad in February 1886), I cannot refrain from writing to express the shame and indignation with which I have read your article in last Saturday's issue on Sir Charles Dilke. There is probably not a man in all England, not excluding yourself, who having read the report of the trial does not believe Dilke guilty; and that you should endeavour for mere party purposes to whitewash such a scoundrel and to pretend that he has been cleared of the charge is a disgrace both to journalism and the Liberal party. As a Radical myself, of course I regret that the services of so able a man should be lost to the party: but, thank God, the Liberal party does not need the support of such immoral men. To say that he will be welcomed back with 'fervour' is a piece of lying toadyism of which the 'Daily News' ought to have been incapable. If you subordinate every moral consideration and all regard for truth to the supposed interests of party in this matter, you will do so in others less serious, and the whole value of your paper is gone, and you will rightly deserve what it is clear from the remarks of other papers you have gained—namely, the contempt of right-thinking men. Even the 'Scotsman,' strange to say, has taken a right view of this case; and it has been left for the 'Daily News,' the leading Liberal paper, as it loves to be called, to show to what depths of utter degradation a paper can sink.

I need hardly add that I shall subscribe no more to the 'News,' and shall cease to take it in.'

The writer was an old friend, and I replied with the freedom ancient friendship permits:

February 24, 1886.

DEAR —,—I have your letter of the 20th, and note that, having read the article in the 'D. N.' on the Dilke trial, you have resolved to give up the paper. Well, we must try and struggle on without you.

I am not quite sure, however, from the tone of your letter that you are quite the sort of person to give an opinion on the case. For my own part, I found a man who has long been a personal friend brought into court upon a charge for which, according to the ruling of the judge and the admission of the prosecuting counsel, there was not a tittle of evidence.

Apart from the disinclination some people have to desert a friend when he is in danger, it did not seem to me quite fair to assume his guilt. This seems to be no difficulty with you, who are not only certain that Sir Charles Dilke is guilty, but that I, in writing what I did, was 'disgracing journalism by pretending to think he was innocent when I believed him guilty.'

You, standing on a mount of morality, and pluming yourself about not being as other men are, take that line as *propér* to the occasion. You, a sinless man, are qualified not only to 'throw the first stone,' but to pelt bystanders who do not happen to agree with you. I will not follow your example by characterising your attitude. But I am sure you will regret that you exhausted your vocabulary of impertinent insinuation and coarse vituperation. When you write to me to express your 'shame and indignation,' denounce me for 'deliberately writing what I know to be false,' characterising me as 'a disgrace to journalism,' accuse me of publishing 'a piece of lying toadyism,' of 'subordinating every moral consideration and all regard for truth,' as 'deserving the contempt of all right-thinking men' (you, for example), and of 'showing to what depths of utter degradation a paper can sink'—what *will* you say if I tell you that, even if I were absolutely wrong, I would rather have my disposition in regarding a case of this kind than yours?

Yours faithfully,

H. W. LUCY.

Lady Dilke frequently spoke and wrote to me with pathetic conviction of her husband's innocence. After full consideration, in justice to the memory of husband and wife, I print one of her letters:

Pyrford, by Maybury: November 13, 1887.

DEAR MR. LUCY,—I should have entirely agreed with you as to the proper course to have pursued had I not at the same



time become aware that such a course could not have been pursued with resolution by one of my husband's nature.

I can quite understand others not realising what I did not myself realise until the constant companionship of day and night revealed it. He is more nervous and sensitive than any woman I ever knew, and suffers agonies of loathing at the accusations brought against him—such as only the few can understand.

This condition of nerves, of shivering disgust and pain, makes it impossible for him, he being quite as proud as he is sensitive, to take a bold line. To have exposed him to the fight immediately after the hideous experiences of last year, with that boiling sense of injustice at heart, unsleeping with anger and anguish, would have been to undertake a hopeless battle, ending possibly in the madhouse. As soon as I realised this I felt the only course was to let him rest and suffer it out until his nerves regained their tone and sleep should come back. Even if we don't succeed in bringing his slanderers to justice, the prosecution of the enquiries has satisfied the craving to get at the truth and put him in a better position, as it were, towards himself, has cleared up many doubtful points. It is a long and costly work, but nothing, no position, no honours, will make him happy as being able to prove his innocence would make him happy, and even if we never can, we must both go on hoping that we *shall*. I don't think any other course was open—he *could not* work unless he were trusted and welcomed.

Thank you so much for your letter and for the enclosure. I see that our friends are speaking for us now all over the country, and I was much touched by your words.

Always yours faithfully,

EMILIA F. S. DILKE.

After six years' absence Dilke returned to Westminster, sent thither by the electors of the Forest of Dean, who remained true to him to the end. A painful ordeal awaited him, and was faced with a patience and courage that finally prevailed. Many of the colleagues and friends with whom he had lived and worked in the 'seventies and early 'eighties had disappeared from the scene. There remained sufficient to make the situation embarrassing. Dilke made no advances. A few old friends, notably Mr. Chamberlain, resumed former relationships. For the most part, members stood aloof watching the ways of the wind.

For some sessions Dilke took no part in debate. A

regular attendant, he patiently sat out the dreariest talk, falling into his old habit of being the first in and out of the Division Lobby. When on the fall of the brief-lived Rosebery Administration he was at the ensuing general election again triumphantly returned for the Forest of Dean, he began to assert himself. Seated in Opposition in the old quarters of the Fourth Party, he found a congenial companion in Mr. Labouchere. Gradually he became a regular participant in debate, upon which he brought to bear wide experience and encyclopædic knowledge. He had not the graces of oratory, the charm of eloquence, or that sense of humour which Harcourt described as an excellent antiseptic when applied to political life. Nevertheless his speeches commanded the attention of a full House, and not infrequently had appreciable influence in controlling a division or in modifying proposed legislation.

When in 1905 Campbell-Bannerman was called upon to form a Ministry, Dilke had reason to believe he would be invited to join it. On what particular utterance or attitude of the new Premier this conviction was based I do not know. It certainly existed, for Dilke, in matters of fact precise almost to pedantry, was not the man to make a mistake in so important a matter. One circumstance that may have encouraged him was the change that had recently taken place in the personality of the Sovereign. So long as Queen Victoria lived there was no hope of his again becoming a Minister of the Crown. Lady Dilke told me with beaming pleasure how Sir Charles had been specially commanded to attend the first levée given by King Edward VII.

Rumour of Campbell-Bannerman's intention in this matter having got wind, strong pressure was probably brought to bear by persons of the class of my esteemed correspondent from the Continent. It prevailed, and when the Ministry was completed Dilke's name was not included in the list. This was perhaps the unkindest cut of all. It finally closed all hope of full restitution. He bore the blow with his accustomed imperturbable calmness. Nevertheless it told upon him mentally and physically. There was some talk of his joining the Labour party in the new Parliament and devoting himself to the culture of a thorn to be applied to the side of the Government. I never heard from him hint of such intention. If it were ever entertained it was not pursued. By the courtesy of the Labour members, to whom the two front benches were, on the suggestion of

the Speaker, allotted, Dilke had reserved for him the prized corner-seat in the front row. He was generally found there at some period of the sitting. Gradually he abandoned his former habit of unintermitted attendance throughout a sitting, with regular interposition in debate.

Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?

He found much-needed rest in his riverside home, Dockett Eddy, whither throughout the summer session he regularly repaired for the week-end, gathering round him a circle of friends, which occasionally included eminent public men from foreign capitals. Paris and Berlin, which in the height of his prosperity recognised his statesmanship, in days of adversity continued to pay him the tribute of cordial homage.

One of the first undertakings of Lord Salisbury's new Ministry on the meeting of Parliament in 1886 was to reform the rules of procedure, hopelessly broken down under the assaults of Parnell and his merry men. I tried to induce some high authorities to communicate their views on the subject to the 'Daily News.' They are guardedly expressed in the subjoined letters, one from a former Speaker, the other from an ex-Chairman of Committee of Ways and Means :

Glynde, Lewes, Sussex : January 23, 1886.

DEAR MR. LUCY,—Your career in the House of Commons is well known to me, and you may be assured that I shall always be willing to receive any communication from you. I wish you well in your new enterprise in the 'Daily News.'

I am sorry that I cannot comply with your request to write to you a public letter on the proposed rules of procedure. On the whole I think they may be turned to good account by accepting some as they stand and amending and enlarging others. The rules relating to the time of sitting and to the duration of the session are important, but they affect rather the convenience of members personally. I doubt whether the House would obtain any relief by meeting daily at 2. But if the session could be so arranged as to leave the summer months free to members by relegating work to the autumn, it would be a great relief in many ways.

Yours truly,

HAMPDEN.

*From H. C. Raikes.*

Carlton Club, Pall Mall, S.W. : January 29, 1886.

DEAR MR. LUCY,—I have read the article on Procedure in the 'Daily News' with much interest, and agree perhaps more with your criticisms than with your approbation. The establishment of an autumn session will, I think, be a good thing if it is as a rule confined to particular classes of business. But the 2 P.M. meeting is intolerable, and as you may perhaps remember I have been a consistent opponent of 'devolution.'

I am flattered by your kind suggestion that I should write to the 'Daily News' on the subject, an invitation which I would gladly accept if Parliament were not sitting. But as I hope to take an active part in discussing the proposed rules in the House, I am unwilling to forestall by publication any little interest which might attach to my views on the subject. You will, I know, understand this.

Yours very truly,  
HENRY CECIL RAIKES.

The proposal that the House of Commons should meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, a favourite idea with Mr. Balfour, was revived during his leadership, and actually carried into effect. Compensation was offered to members for the inconvenience of assembling at so early an hour by providing a two hours' interval for dinner. After fairly prolonged trial the scheme broke down, a justification of the view of its 'intolerable' character concurred in by Lord Hampden and Mr. Raikes. The experiment had, however, permanent influence on the procedure of the House, since by way of compromise it was agreed that the Speaker should take the chair at 2.40 instead of 4 o'clock as in former days.

One of the most pleasing memories in connexion with my editorship of the 'Daily News' was that it completed a relationship between John Morley (now Viscount) and myself perhaps unique in its way. At one time, whilst directing the fortunes of the old 'Pall Mall Gazette,' he was my editor, I on his invitation contributing to the journal a series of Parliamentary sketches. During the first month of my new service in Bouverie Street I had the advantage of his invaluable assistance as leader-writer. On the 3rd February, 1886, he wrote to inform me that he had accepted office, with Cabinet rank, in Gladstone's

newly formed Government, and must sever his connexion with journalism. Responding to my acknowledgment of the announcement, he wrote :

‘ Many thanks for your letter. I know that I can count on your kindness to the full, and I shall need it. You may well call it a perilous undertaking : I did not seek it.’

## V.

### PROFESSOR BLACKIE.

For half a century, between 1845 and the early days of 1895, a familiar figure to be met in Princes Street, Edinburgh, wore a tartan plaid. As he walked with sprightly step, nodding salutation right and left, people turned to watch him with friendly eye. It was Professor Stuart Blackie, one of the best-known and most popular Scotchmen of his day.

I formed his acquaintance at Oban early in the 'seventies, when holiday-making there under the alluring guidance of William Black. It was not my first personal contact with him. That befell earlier in the season, when unbeknown I was present at one of his lectures in an Edinburgh University class-room. Going northward my wife and I halted at Edinburgh to enjoy the hospitality of Dr. George Smith, not long home from India, where he had for many years edited the leading English journal. In order to preach a gospel of broader Liberalism than even in those days was to be found in the columns of the ' Scotsman ' under the editorship of renowned Russel, a morning paper had been established in Edinburgh known as the ' Daily Review.' Dr. Smith was editor, and on the recommendation of Taylor Innes I was appointed London Correspondent, telegraphing a column thrice a week. For this I received an honorarium exceeding my salary on the ' Daily News ' with its night and day engagements all the year round.

In the then young circle of the Smith family, the boys endowed with heritage of the fine character and mental gifts of their mother, was one who has since won for himself high renown among Scotch scholars, preachers, and writers. Twenty years later, Stuart Blackie, ' dandering,' as he wrote to his wife, ' through the leafy luxuriance of this learned metropolis (Oxford), found Fairbairn at Mansfield with his wife and family,

and with him, in most unexpected fashion, my old student George Adam Smith, now Professor of Hebrew in the Free Church College, Glasgow.' Dr. Smith has since risen to the loftier heights on which is throned the Principal of Aberdeen University.

At the time of which I write he was still a student. On my expressing a desire to see something of the work of the University he smuggled me into the class-room, to which the Professor presently entered and without preface commenced to talk, a process distinct from lecturing.

It happened that beneath the business of the hour ran an undercurrent of humour. There had been a brief interval of holiday nature. At the close of the last gathering Blackie had written in chalk on the board, 'Professor Blackie's classes will meet again next week.' One of the youths, sneaking back after the room was cleared, struck out the initial letter, leaving the sentence to read, 'Professor Blackie's lasses will meet again next week.' Coming upon this Blackie erased another letter, and on the boys re-assembling they found the proclamation, 'Professor Blackie's asses will meet again next week.'

It was the junior Greek class I found at work—about 150 youths seated on a steeply rising gallery, facing and faced by a picturesque figure in academic gown, broad white collar, and flowing white hair. My note-book fixes the date as November 25, 1879. Gladstone had lately crossed the Border on the first of the Midlothian campaigns. Edinburgh was in an ecstasy of enthusiasm that bubbled night and day at sight of the old campaigner and within sound of a voice presently to fill the spacious area of the Market Hall. In the van of the throng that waited outside the overcrowded halls in which Gladstone thundered were the students. It was their custom of an afternoon, when, after speaking in the Music Hall or elsewhere, he drove back with his host to Dalmeny, to run beside the open carriage cheering all the way.

Edinburgh saw another sight when, thirteen years later, Gladstone returned to the field of his early triumph bringing his sheaves with him in the shape of a Home Rule Bill for Ireland. For one present through both occasions the contrast was acutely painful. In 1879 Edinburgh sat admiringly at his feet. In 1892 she, with almost savage gesture, turned her back on him. But that is another story.

It was Professor Blackie's cheerful habit to preface the  
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sterner and drier work of exposition by a little talk on men and things more or less remotely concerned with Greece, its language and its literature, always sparkling with humour, rich with grains of shrewd criticism and sound common-sense. On this particular morning chance reference to Minerva led him off over a wide field of discursive talk on the goddess and the festivals Athens held in her honour.

Incidentally he observed, 'I don't know what Mr. Gladstone thinks of Minerva.' Whereupon the class, instantly bringing back their thought to modern Athens, broke into thunderous applause, expressed in the usual fashion by the beating of feet on the floor.

Blackie plaintively and hopelessly protested against the interruption. 'Why can't I make a remark without you breaking into this silly noise?' he asked, and then resumed—'I don't know, I say, what Mr. Gladstone thinks.'

Again applause broke forth. For sake of the business of the morning, the Professor, when he found an opportunity of continuing his remarks, was fain to adopt a compromise and strategically refer to Mr. Gladstone as 'he.'

The Greek class was not the only one whose decorum was exceptionally disturbed by the enthusiasm engendered in the youthful mind by the historic event of Gladstone's visit. It happened that in the Law class the young scholar who stood forty-third on the class-list bore the name just then most honoured in Scotland. At the calling over on the assembling of the class each morning the approach to this particular number was watched with great interest. When the Professor in the regular course called out 'Gladstone' there was a burst of cheers which lasted several minutes. Like Professor Blackie, the Professor attempted to avoid a scene by calling 'Forty-three.' The class sharply supplied the proper name. Amid cries of 'Gladstone, Gladstone,' they stamped and cheered.

It is more than probable that in the eyes of these young politicians special zest was found in the fact that the learned and respected Professor was a Conservative of pronounced type, to whom the name they applauded was not likely to prove acceptable.

Some weeks later Blackie and I foregathered at Oban, where he had a house encircled by hills and fronting the Bay. Charles Mackay, the poet, also had quarters at Oban, and was accustomed



to be at home after dinner to a little circle of friends, amongst the most regular attendants being William Black and Professor Blackie. The mistress of the household was a lady in the prime of young womanhood, whom we knew as Miss Mackay, niece of the poet and journalist. She played the piano with fine touch and sang charmingly. Blackie was accustomed to break into song as inconsequently as he dropped into poetry. He always insisted upon a chorus to Miss Mackay's song, regardless of the composer's intentions in the matter. In later years we knew the simple-mannered songstress as Marie Corelli.

On a second visit to Oban, paid either in the next year or the one following, when I landed Blackie rushed out from the crowd which through the season daily assembled 'to see the boat come in,' and in sight of a thronged pier and a shipload of passengers publicly kissed me. The action was momentarily disconcerting. A quarter of a century later, reading the charming volume of his letters to his wife, I find under date Aberdeen September 20, 1859, the entry: 'On Monday I made an interesting acquaintance, James Martineau, the Unitarian professor and preacher who had been up at Braemar for two months and preached last Sunday forenoon in this place. In the afternoon I came home with him and kissed him because he is good.'

It is pleasant even to be able to hope that I was kissed because I was good.

I saw much of Blackie on this second occasion. We took walks together over the hills and far away. He was at home in every farmhouse or labourer's cottage we passed, suffusing barely furnished rooms with the briskness and buoyancy of his presence. A few months before he died, writing to his nephew, he added what were probably the last of the many verses with which he was accustomed to embroider his correspondence with intimate friends:

Not death is evil but the way to death:  
Through dim divinings and with scanty breath  
A length of deedless days and sleepless nights  
Sown with all sorrows, shorn of all delights.  
Teach me, oh God, in might and mercy sure  
Teach me, the child of joyance, to endure.  
Endure in truth, no easy thing to learn,  
But how to learn it be thy main concern.  
Though now thou canst not march with rattling speed  
Thy soul shall shape thy thought into a deed.  
Look round and find some useful thing to do  
And God will make it pleasant work for you.

One noontide, making our way back to Oban, he asked me to stay at his house for luncheon. As usual he had throughout the brisk walk been full of conversational fire and energy. It was perhaps fancy, but I noticed a change in voice and manner as we shut the gate behind us and walked up the short carriage-drive leading to the hall-door. He presented me to his wife in an almost humble deprecatory fashion, foreign to all earlier acquaintance. I cannot say her reception was enthusiastic, though before we parted, at the end of two hours, we were, to Blackie's undisguised delight, great friends. I fancy she was accustomed to her husband's unexpected arrival at mealtime with stray persons picked up—not always like flowers—by the wayside and dreaded fresh infliction.

It was impossible to conceive a more striking contrast between two persons than was presented in a room where Blackie sat with his wife. He was, as he aptly described himself in the verse quoted, 'the child of joyance,' bubbling with emotion, generally humorous, sometimes sad. She prim, practical, a stickler for extreme propriety alike in word and manner. In spite of this incongruity the union was a most happy one, of its kind doubtless the best conceivable for the erratic Professor. Showing me over the house after luncheon, he told me that Mrs. Blackie had been sole architect, drawing the plans and drafting the specifications with her own hand.

One of the most deathless and widely spread superstitions thrives upon the number 'thirteen.' There are grown-up people, in other respects sane, who would rather starve than sit at dinner at a table where the company marked that figure. Blackie told me a lively story on this subject. Arriving one night at Dalmeny, Lord Rosebery's seat near Edinburgh, he, coming late, found the guests at dinner. With characteristic cheeriness, and in obedience to pleasing habit of making himself at home in any circumstances, he brought up a chair and seated himself near his hostess. He instantly became conscious of a strange uneasiness in the circle. As it deepened into constrained silence, Lady Rosebery whispered to him that he had better go into the drawing-room, where he would find Lady Aberdeen.

Blackie had not dined, and was not the kind of man to see others pleasantly engaged without desire to join. 'Yes, by-and-by,' he answered, to Lady Rosebery's increased embarrassment. Presently one of the guests came up and pointed out to him that

his arrival made the company thirteen at table, and there was a lady present who was a firm believer in the tradition that in such arithmetical circumstances death would be busy with one or more of the guests before the year was out. So the hungry Professor dolefully departed to the drawing-room.

I remember an analogous case happening in the same hospitable room. Dining at Dalmeny, during the last of the Midlothian campaigns, I was surprised to find the host seated apart from the big table in company with Mrs. Gladstone and Sir Algernon West. After dinner I ventured to ask the reason for this eccentric arrangement.

'Didn't you notice,' Lord Rosebery replied, 'that we were thirteen at dinner? Had that number been at one table, some one might have been disturbed in mind. I have no superstitions on the point myself, but others have.'

The incident Professor Blackie narrates took place just nine years earlier. It is quite possible it was in Lord Rosebery's mind when he made up two parties at separate tables.

It was strange to find Queen Victoria susceptible to the fetish. The subject coming up at the dinner-table of the late Lord Granville when he lived in Green Street, he told how whilst still a young man he was invited to dine with the Duke of Cambridge to meet her Majesty. At the last moment he was disabled by an attack of gout. On the Queen's arrival, finding the dinner guests were thirteen all told, she positively refused to sit at table. The difficulty was got over by sending for Princess Mary, at the time too young to have been included in the original arrangement.

Parnell, of all men, was a slave to the quaint superstition. There is a familiar story of his positively refusing during an election campaign with Tim Healy to occupy a bedroom numbered thirteen. Whilst in Kilmainham, there was submitted to him by his colleague the draft of a bill amending the Irish Land Act. On discovering that the clauses counted up to thirteen, he threw down the manuscript with a gesture of terror and refused to have anything to do with it.

Blackie, though he laughed at the superstition, was greatly interested in it. He used to tell a story about a society of merry souls who deliberately set themselves to flout its omens. They called themselves the Thirteen Club. They dined together on Fridays, and walking to their rendezvous

(numbered thirteen in its street) would go some distance out of their way for the privilege of passing under a ladder. They sat down thirteen at dinner, deliberately crossed spoons and knives, helped each other to salt, and otherwise outraged the ritual of the superstition.

This was all very well. But there was a strange case in connexion with the history of the club—I forget whether it was located in Edinburgh or London—on which Blackie dilated. In certain company, a man of genius, whose name was at the time familiar to and popular with the English-speaking race, gleefully told how the previous Friday he had filled a vacancy in the membership of the Thirteen Club, and gloated over its pragmatical performances. Within a month he, of his own free action, took a critical step which finally wrecked his professional career. Resigning a high, in some respects unique position, he embarked upon an enterprise in which he lost not only money, but his hold on the public.

That was, indeed, the strangest part of the story. With the change of circumstance and surrounding there unaccountably disappeared the skilful touch that had brought him renown and affluence. Of course, it was all a coincidence. But it is a striking one.<sup>1</sup>

## VI.

### MEMORIES.

WHEN I lived in Shrewsbury, trying my prentice hand on journalism, a principal personage in the town was Dr. Clement. A strong Liberal, he, at election times and preliminary thereto, set himself diligently to defeat the machinations of a local hairdresser named John Frail, famous in his time, who by sheer genius in electioneering, untrammelled by nice scruples with respect to the law relating to bribery and corruption, succeeded in gaining the confidence of the Carlton Club, and the appointment as their election agent at Shrewsbury. I find among old letters one written by Dr. Clement in 1868, in which he tells a story about Disraeli which, as far as I know, does not appear in any biography. 'It is,' he writes, 'quite true that I

<sup>1</sup> On page 343 of the first volume of these *Reminiscences* will be found another true story of recent date illustrating this quaint superstition.

was bound over to keep the peace towards Mr. Disraeli in 1841. It is also quite true that I referred to the incident in public, being anxious to show that in this great free country the highest offices are open to all men. In 1841 Mr. Disraeli was a mere political adventurer, and my friend, Sir William Yardley, was almost a briefless barrister.'

The interesting episode he refers to happened during the Parliamentary contest of 1841, which resulted in Disraeli's election for the borough—a seat he held till July 1847, when he found permanent quarters in the county of Bucks.

At the inquest arising out of the wreck off Dungeness held at Lydd on the 22nd January, 1873, of the emigrant ship, 'Northfleet,' involving the loss of 300 lives, to which passing reference was made in the first volume of this narrative, there flashed forth an unforgettable bit of comedy varying the grim tragedy. Amongst the passengers on board the doomed ship who escaped with his life was one John Beveridge. It was known that he had been on deck at the moment of the collision and his evidence was looked forward to with extreme interest. Called to the witness-box, his grave countenance and something in the solemn manner in which he, having taken the oath, kissed the book, went to confirm this impression. I find in my notes, taken in court, the following conversation:—

The Coroner: 'What is your name?' 'John Beveridge,' replied the witness. 'Were you a passenger by this ill-fated ship?' 'No, sir.' 'You were one of the crew then?' 'No, sir.' 'Then what are you?' 'I'm a fish curer.'

Blank silence fell upon the court, the coroner looking at his clerk, then round at the jury, and back at the witness in a puzzled way, Mr. Beveridge himself quietly staring straight before him, evidently ready to answer upon oath any further question.

'What do you know about the wreck of the "Northfleet"?' the coroner at last asked. 'I know nothing—except,' added Mr. Beveridge in a cautious manner, to which his broad Scotch accent gave additional effect, 'what I have read about it in the newspapers.'

After the consternation caused by this declaration, made with indescribable imperturbability, had partially subsided, he was asked to explain how he, knowing nothing of the wreck, came to be in the inquest-room at Lydd.

'Well, sir, I'll tell you as far as I can understand it myself. I got a telegram on Monday at Berwick-on-Tweed, where I live, telling me to come down to Lydd to give evidence at the inquest on the "Northfleet." I wrote back to say I knew nothing about it, and what about my expenses. On Thursday I got this note from Messrs. Patton and Co., which says, "The Coroner requires you at the inquest without fail on Saturday at Lydd, so you had better leave Berwick to-morrow. You will have to go by rail through London to Folkestone, and then take carriage on. Enclosed is a cheque for expenses £3; we will pay you any further reasonable expenses that may be due.'" I did not know what it all meant; but as the money for the expenses was there right enough, I came away.'

This astonishing story, told without movement of a muscle of the face, was received with uncontrollable laughter. When it subsided, Mr. Beveridge quietly resumed his seat at the back of the court, safe in the possession of funds for his 'expenses.'

47 Barbara Street, Barnsbury, N. November 25, 1874.

MY DEAR LUCY,—I have to thank you for the kindest and most generous judgment ever yet passed upon any work of mine. Your praise is all the sweeter because I had such strong doubts about pleasing anybody with that fairy story. I am ill at dates, but I know that this is very nearly the anniversary of my arrival in London. Everybody partly knew—but nobody altogether—the poverty and sorrows which at that time beset me. Since that time the friends I have found, the good fortune which has befallen me, the kindness with which I have everywhere been treated are gratefully and wonderfully surprising. You will not think me too effusive if I tell you that your notice of my work has both surprised and touched me. It is one more of a hundred pleasant things which have come to pass for me during the last three weeks, and it helps to make the contrast between now and last year the greater. If I say too much, please remember that I am emptying on you the gratitude I owe to half a score of people. I am, dear Lucy, yours very truly,

D. CHRISTIE MURRAY.

I forget the name of the fairy story alluded to in this letter, as, indeed, I cannot recall the title of a novel written some years later by the same gifted author, in which he did me the honour to create a character for which I unknowingly sat as a lay figure. It was not intended to be flattering. But it did not hurt me, and excuse was forthcoming from the fact that

in the meantime I had opportunities, sedulously cultivated, to do him more substantial services. Anyhow, it is pleasant to come upon this specimen of earlier manner.

A lady, well known in London Society, was, and I believe still is, in possession of one of Whistler's earliest phantasies. At dinner one night, in reply to some remark I made about the picture, she said her original difficulty in hanging it rose from doubt as to which was the right side up, a little pleasantry devoid of intentional malice. Mention of the incident in 'May-fair' brought a characteristic letter from the irate artist. I did not at the time know Whistler personally. The last occasion on which I met him, shortly before his death, was at dinner at Fisher Unwin's. He arrived three-quarters of an hour late, and did not seem to regard the matter as requiring either explanation or apology.

96 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. June 10th, 1877.

DEAR SIR,—I find in 'Piccadilly' of this week that 'May Fair' and I have both suffered. Under the title of 'The Upside-down Joke,' an anecdote is taken from your columns that establishes a bond of union between us. We have both been abused. I have been turned 'upside down,' and you have been called 'stupid'—both unwarrantable liberties. Believe, I beseech you, in my sympathy, and let us insist together upon the name of the aggrieved lady, that her complaint may be attended to, and whilst your intelligence be vindicated again as has already been attempted in 'Piccadilly,' I may also profit, and, once for all, be placed before a sensible public 'right side up.'

Faithfully yours,

J. A. McN. WHISTLER.

To the Editor of 'May Fair.'



# THE GRIP OF LIFE.<sup>1</sup>

BY AGNES AND EGERTON CASTLE.

## BOOK I.

### CHAPTER V.

#### THE COMTESSE AGLAË.

'I did not know,' wrote Ughtred to his friend, 'what a woman's capacities of sympathy might be. For me, as you know, the modern woman was a being distinctly (to use the odious phrase) of the opposite sex. For me all womanhood had died with Helen and Nausicaa, with Alcestis and Antigone. Mother or sister I never knew to love. I could conceive being very fond of a sister; but woman, that mysterious entity, as conqueror, as embodying those elements which should subjugate my better self, my reason, has always essentially appeared to me the enemy. If not enemy, a wearying creature, expecting attentions that have no meaning to me, terrifying me with her archness, abashing me by taking for granted sentiments which in me can have no existence. But I found last night that a woman could mean something else. I can conceive now that a man could make of a woman a friend, find in her a delicate, spiritual companionship, more satisfying perhaps to the æsthetic and poetic parts of his nature than to his deeper qualities, but nevertheless calculated to give a kind of finish, an adornment to life.

'Now, you need not smile and lift your shaggy eyebrows with that tolerant air of yours, prepared for the obvious discrepancy, prepared for all men's weakness. I have declared myself to you passionately celibate; I am not in the least going back upon that statement—quite the contrary, indeed. Have patience to read or to listen, for as I write to you I feel your presence so strongly that it is as if I were speaking to you. My dear John Gordon, the woman who has just come into my life is married. She could be nothing more to me than friend, if she ever cared

<sup>1</sup>Copyright, 1912, by Agnes and Egerton Castle, in the United States of America.

to be so much. She is older than I am, too, by some ten or fifteen years perhaps, though there is no touch of years about her gracious personality, except what is refining, modelling. The years have brought and have taken away, and they seem to have left something—well, about as close to perfection as it is possible for flesh and blood to embody. What poor things words are! The flesh and blood, the embodiment—that is the least of the Comtesse de Braye's personality. The mind, the soul, the subtle essences that look and move and speak in her, that her very presence seems to give out—those are the things that count, at least to me!

'When she came into the room last evening, she brought with her some element of harmony, which the challenging youth of her niece had seemed to disturb. At first I thought no more of her than that she was agreeable: I liked her voice, the touch of her hand, the sureness of her air, her rare gesture, her repose. Before the evening was out, I told myself that such repose is an art.

'She spoke very little. The girl, the hoyden—I scarce know how to define her, for she has the outward appearance of a woman, the manners of a child; the mind, the outlook on life of a schoolboy—spoke a good deal between spasms of silence. No repose about her. And my host on his side has a noisy flow of conversation. Fortunately he has a way also of answering himself; so that we two—I mean, Madame de Braye and I—could be dumb at our will, without seeming so.

'Yet, when I look back on that dinner, it strikes me as a merry meal. The dining-room is panelled and furnished in Flemish carved wood, very heavy and handsome. In the middle of the table was a most elaborate silver ship, a magnificent piece of *orfèvrerie*, of the seventeenth century—the time when ships rode the waves in beauty.

'Solange—that is, the young lady: never was title less well bestowed—saw my eye fixed upon it.

"That is mine," she said, with a blatant toss of her head.

'Her uncle looked up from his soup with his great laugh.

"It is true. It is the little one's. You shall have it, my dear, when you marry. Her grandmother was Dutch," he added to me in explanation.

'It seems that it was a Dutch custom to include such a *nef* among the wedding gifts.

" "I have a castle in Holland," went on the strange girl.

'She fixed me with her eyes, and—you know my disgusting trick—I blushed, as if the remark could possibly affect me.

" "Yes, yes," continued the Comte, dashing his napkin across his moustache; "but do not make us the inventory of your possessions to-night, *petite!* Wait till Sir Maxwell knows us a little better."

'Good man! There was not the least use in his wife's saying gently, "Sir Ughtred, *mon ami.*" But it gave me the pleasure of hearing my name pronounced by her for the first time. She speaks a pretty English with just that care and precision which makes our own tongue so charming when well spoken by the foreigner.

'I wish I could show her to you. I know you would admire her. Hers is a presence (the reverse of that of Mademoiselle Solange) which, like a faint fragrance or a shadow, or a dying fall of music, or anything else you like to figure to yourself of exquisite and delicate, steals upon you. No challenge here. A modesty of tint, a refinement of line—the note, the tone is all low-pitched. I think her hair is brown; upon my soul, I could not tell you. It might be that "cinder-blond" which holds no gold in it. It certainly makes a misty aura round her small pale face. Her eyes—I can no more tell you what colour they are—they might be hazel, or grey, or green, any indefinite shade. Her mouth has a droop of sadness in it, not lost even when she smiles.

'I suppose most people would call her too thin. Her robes were misty, draped about her as I never thought I should see anything living draped.

'After all, I don't think she is thin. It is a hideous word, with a hideous suggestion. You wouldn't call the young sickle-moon thin, I suppose? Nor one of those Tanagra dancing-girls, where you feel the long slenderness under the flying folds? And, by the way, I, who can neither tell you the colour of the Comtesse's hair, nor of her eyes, nor the shape of her nose, can very definitely enumerate to you the exact particulars of these items as regards her niece, who is singularly repulsive to me. Her hair is red, copper-red, just the tone of copper the third day after it has been polished; and her eyes are golden hazel, the iris and the pupil very strongly, almost brutally defined; her nose is a small, keen aquiline, and it lifts her lip to show

small, even, very white teeth, and—yes, you've guessed—she is my ghost of the Keep! Another illusion gone.

'To make the affair more comic, she, on her side, also had taken me for an apparition: that of my relentless ancestor; and she was no more pleased with me for being alive than I with her! *Quâ* phantom she had, of course, remained a thing of interest to me. You should have seen how she faced me when she exclaimed, "It was you!" pulling a mouth of scorn. Thereto she added, as I said, a singular, but to me complimentary remark: I was capable (she averred) of behaving like the cold-blooded recluse.

"How did you get there?" I stupidly asked her. "I went out and looked, and there was not standing-place for a goat."

'She tossed her red mane at me, with the air that declared "You would doubtless think so!" and then said briefly (her English is bad):

"I clomb."

"Clomb?" I echoed, staring. In truth she must have thought me an ass.

"Clomb," she repeated, "from the sea." Then, with her lip that pointed my stupidity, she deigned a further explanation, "I rowed round in the boat."

'A singular reticence on her part struck me as I drove home. Never by a word, before her relatives, did she hint of our encounter in the Keep, or our sharp engagement on my arrival.

"So you have made acquaintance?" said the Comte genially, as he came in upon us.

"Yes," she answered, shutting that open mouth of hers tightly and flinging me a dark look.

'Why was she silent? Silence which becomes *Aglâé de Braye* like a flower is by no means *Mademoiselle Solange's* natural adornment. Her personality is like a trumpet, and a brass one at that; if you don't hear the blast, you are always expecting it; whereâs—do you not like the name of *Aglâé*? When I heard her husband call her by it, it rang in my ears like an echo of something heard in those old pastures where my mind loves to feed.

'Dinner over, we went out with the ladies, after the fashion of my hosts, and we returned to the large harmonious room where her taste seems to preside. She likes it dim—it was characteristic of the two personalities that *Mademoiselle Solange*

should have turned on all the lights on her entrance—she keeps it full of space and shadows. After some general conversation we had a little talk apart, she and I. She asked me delicately about my work. Then came a surprise, flattering to my vanity. She takes in the *English Century Review*, and has read my little series of Greek Studies.

“I like to keep in touch with the movements in the thinking world,” she said, “just in my quiet way.”

“Just in my quiet way” . . . ! In that phrase she was describing herself.

On the table beside her—she sat in what was evidently her own chosen place, with a crystal bowl of heliotrope at her elbow and a small green-shaded lamp—two or three volumes lay scattered, bound in faint-hued leathers: Gilbert Murray’s “Hippolytus,” Lang’s “Bion and Theocritus,” and . . . yes, dear friend, do not scoff if I admit I had a sting of pleasure at the sight of it—my own humble work on the Orphic Hymns!

When she saw me lift the little book (set in a tooled vellum binding, no less!) and my involuntary start of recognition, she smiled. . . . Then she quoted, and her voice had a positive lilt of melody.

‘I scarcely know why I should have felt so astonished to hear my words fall from her lips; why the astonishment should have been so joyous to me, as a discovery of something precious and lovely where it was least expected. It may seem trivial to you—a mere commonplace incident of conversation with a fairly well-read and cultured woman—but to me it was, as I said, melody.

They came, all three, very hospitably to the door to see me off. The rain had stopped; there was a ragged moonlit sky. The grinding of the waves upon the beach was very audible.

The Comtesse had flung over her head the filmy scarf that was thrown round her shoulders. She minded me of sad and fateful evanescent and lovely images, Semele—Hecate—daughter of Perseus, “half veiled with a shining veil, thinking delicate thoughts.”’

## CHAPTER VI.

SOLANGE DE FLODORE.

UGHTRED's head was full of his new acquisition to the interest of life as he took the mare Bess easily over the downs towards Crossforth House. Bess's paces were so perfect and she and her master were already upon such sympathetic terms that he was able to give her as free a rein as to his fancy.

A man who lived as much in dreams as in the sharp realities of study, his imagination was more than usually active this morning. When people choose, as he had done, to cut themselves off from the usual emotions of humanity, they are generally given to deep introspection of the subtler emotions of their own souls, watching those unknown forces at work within themselves with more intensity, perhaps, than the simpler brother would devote to the greatest events of life.

With the unexpected perception, the hitherto unexperienced pleasure which the evening with the Comtesse had given him, he was now conscious of a change in himself. Already there seemed a new light on his horizon; it was colouring all his impressions. His surroundings assumed a fresh aspect in his eyes; he fancied her, now in his library and now at his table, now sharing with him in silent appreciation the view of purple moor and rolling woodland from the terrace. He had thought of his neglected work, since their meeting, with a zest he had scarcely known since the ardent ascetic college days; and again, it was a zest with a difference. It was not purely to satisfy his own self-meted standard or for the rare, much-valued word of commendation from John Gordon's lips; it was with a curious unavowed memory of the light of interest he had marked in those eyes of unremembered colour.

And as he rode now, pondering, the voice of the sea once more caught his ear in its ceaseless plaint against the shore; and instantly it conjured up a vision of her face in the porch, glimmering pale from between the veiling folds. It had left upon him an impression of something scarce earthly; of something etherealised to a mere expression of spirit, mysterious, infinitely more attractive than any human loveliness could be.

When he drew close to the house (a little shocked, in his fastidiousness, at its daylight pomposity) it was humanity

that met him on the porch, sheer humanity in the shape of Solange de Flodore; and in his eyes scarce lovely at that, unless such blooming youth could be held, of its essence, loveliness.

She was standing, arms akimbo, watching him approach. Her short riding-skirt, tucked up high under one hand, revealed an unusual length of top-boot; her loose riding-jacket hung open, the belted shirt within had a turn-down collar, exposing a column of fair young throat. A linen cowboy hat was pinned at a rakish tilt on the luxuriant hair, which, though severely brushed back and tightly plaited in a ribboned queue, broke from its attempted confinement into crisp tendrils about her temples and ears. She had a kind of bandit look, not unbecoming, however, to her audacious style.

'How,' she cried, as soon as he was within hail, 'you can ride? Is it possible?'

'Does it surprise you so much?' answered he, the former antagonism rising quickly within him, as he drew rein.

'I thought your usual mode of getting about would be in a carriage and pair,' she responded from her tilting, impudent lip, and came down with a step to pat the satin coat of his mare. 'You've come at a nice quiet pace, I see,' she added sarcastically. 'That is a well-trained beast, *hein?* . . . She takes you like an arm-chair.'

The young man felt himself flush. As if he cared for her impertinence!

'Is the Comtesse at home?' he asked briefly, and was about to dismount, when he was arrested by a sonorous shout from the hall:

'Do not descend! Do not descend! We were about to set out for a canter, the little one and I.'

Booted and spurred, the Comte's broad figure here appeared at the door. His bearded face was jubilant.

'*Hé, la belle bête, the fine mare!*' he said. 'Yes, yes, I remember she was poor Basil's! What say you, we will go round to the stud farm. I will show you a colt—a colt, my friend!'—he kissed his yellow glove ecstatically. 'Here come the gees. Yes, yes, and afterwards you will lunch! There is no denial. We will take across the park and down by the shore—eh, *petite?* That will give us a gallop.'

The 'gees,' a splendid heavy-weight brown and a weedy-looking yellow chestnut, were clattering up to the door. In his



somewhat fussy examination of their appointments the Comte missed his niece's remark to Sir Ughtred. It was delivered in seemingly innocent tones.

'Do you gallop across country? We can very well go round by the road.'

He condescended no reply. What spite had she against him? he wondered angrily. There was vindictiveness in her bright eyes. A mere freak of antipathy, perhaps, said the student to himself. Certainly he was himself conscious that her proximity was scarcely pleasant to him. Gloomily he turned his horse's head towards the park again: he had reckoned on another way of spending his morning.

Bess kicked up her heels with much enjoyment, excited by the unwonted company. With the dash of the wind against his face, the exhilaration of the rapid motion, Ughtred felt his ill-temper vanish. He turned a smile on the Comte as the latter, thundering in the rear, puffed out an encomium on the mare's paces.

'You would not sell her, I suppose?' he added; 'I'd give——' What M. de Braye would have given remained unsaid, for Ughtred's laugh was answer enough.

'Sell her? Sell Bess!'

But he was glad she was admired, and was boy enough still to steal a glance at Solange, who, at hopeless loggerheads with her awkward nag, had some difficulty in inducing the creature to take any course which would keep her and her rider up to the others. What had the ill-mannered girl to say of rider and horse now?

She had not anything to say. She eyed him thoughtfully while jerking as if mechanically at her reins.

'Solange,' cried her uncle in French, 'you have an execrable hand! Do you think you'll teach Besom anything by sawing at her jaws like that? You should have a tighter curb, child.'

Solange tossed her head and jerked her shoulder with an eloquence that said beyond words: 'I'll go my own way.' Then to Ughtred's surprise she wheeled her ungainly steed on the other side of him.

'I'm breaking her in myself,' she confided, 'and I'm going to make of her a better jumper than any horse of Uncle

Annibal's—see if I don't. I call her Besom. Don't you think it's a good name?'

She jerked out these sentences at him with the defiant air of a shy child.

'Why Besom?' asked Ughtred, trying to be amiable.

'Because she's out of "Black Witch" by "Sweep,"' was the glib answer.

At sight of his puzzled air the girl broke into a shout of laughter, and hung upon her reins with her usual violence to induce the fortunately hard-mouthed Besom to convey her back to the Comte's left.

Ughtred, conscious that he had displayed his profound ignorance of sporting jargon, gave an impatient hint of bridle and heel, and Bess started upon her skimming canter, carrying him in a moment out of hearing of that vexatious and, to his ears, gross laughter. He made for the side of the park which sloped towards the downs, growing rougher and more barren every moment.

But his intention of being first on the shore was frustrated by the sudden gaping of a wide ditch across his course, into which a less docile creature than Bess might well have carried him headlong in her stride. It was not a leap to take without consideration. As he halted he could hear the shouts of the Comte behind him; the thunder and the tattoo of the galloping steeds. In front of him stretched the fine dried grass that a few hundred feet beyond gave place to the sand and shingle of the beach. Though it was a calm day, with scarce a breaker except on the lips of the shore itself, the sea voices, as ever on that coast, were complaining. For it is a rough, broken rampart that England here presents to those western waters that can break with such fury against her; and the incoming tide was searching the deep caverns of the rocks, grinding the loose pebbles on the beach with hoarse and constant clamour.

The young man turned seawards—all was dull green under the mild grey sky; the merest breath of wind blew against his face; the whole earth, the great scoop of ocean, the dull line of horizon seemed held as under a vast grey cup. The beach spread curving before him for three furlongs or so, when the sudden crags sprang up, the rudest holding on its flanks, some two miles to the north, his own mysterious Keep. He could see the grey outline of the tower against the lighter grey sky; a couple of sea-birds flashed livid white between him and the

vision. The scent of brine, of seaweed, and acrid marine vegetation was in his nostrils, but something nearer, too, and more fragrant—the pungency of crushed wild thyme. Afterwards, when he looked back upon those few moments of waiting, they seemed to him to have held the passage of his life from one plane into another: from his chosen height of detached thought and study to the passionate valley of feeling where dwelt the crowd.

‘*Holà, mon ami*, you were about to break your neck! This way round to the bridge!’ The Comte, his face rubicund with heat, had drawn rein beside him, and was pointing with his whip: ‘That is the way—by the little bridge.’

Solange here rejoined them also, her curious animal advancing at a sidelong gallop, its head straining in one direction, its legs in another. In her struggle for mastery her close-plaited hair had come untied and hung partly in elf locks about her cheeks, partly in a glorious tangle down her back. Her face, too, was scarlet, and, looking at her in distaste, Ughtred was suddenly struck with the essential resemblance between uncle and niece.

‘Go round by the bridge,’ repeated Mademoiselle Solange, with out-thrust lip. ‘Oh, yes, go round by the bridge, you two.’ She waved her gauntleted hand. ‘I—I and Besom—we’ll meet you in time, I dare say.’

She turned her brute’s head towards the ditch and, exciting him with hand and heel and wild cries, dashed past them. Then Ughtred had a new glimpse of her: with dishevelled hair—a Walküre! Her cries rang in his ear, high and savage, like those of some fierce bird.

‘She’ll kill herself,’ said the Comte, with the calmness of long habit. Nothing, indeed, could be done to interfere. They saw the yellow horse check itself on its rush, point its ears for a breathless second; then there was a gathering of its ungainly limbs, and, to Ughtred’s surprise and relief, the creature went over the wide gaping trench as if it had wings.

A splendid leap—Besom had seemed to rise on the rider’s cry, swoop and sink with it.

‘Bravo, *petite*!’ applauded M. de Braye, with a loud laugh. ‘They can jump—she and her Besom—*il n’y a pas à dire, hein?* Little Satans that they are!—*Allons, mon ami!*’

He twitched his reins and the heavy steed turned obediently upon the bridle-path that led to the bridge.

On the further side of the chasm Mademoiselle de Flodore sat on her yellow horse, one hand patting its ewe neck, eyes and smile directed jeeringly at Sir Ughtred. His spirit and his cheek took fire under the taunt thus mutely conveyed.

What!—that bundle of sinews and bones and ochre-coloured hide, that hideous Besom to take such a swallow's dart, and his Bess jog round by the bridge! The girl's cry was still circling round his brain as he pressed his knees and gripped the reins.

'On, darling!' he exclaimed, and was hardly aware that he had spoken. He felt the lovely easy pace beneath him; heard his host's startled shout; saw the ditch yawn and knew himself rising in the air. After this glorious sensation he knew little more, for the earth seemed to rise up and strike him; and amid an overpowering fragrance of wild thyme consciousness fell from him.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THREE VISITORS.

'John Gordon, my revered friend—here I am, literally tied by the leg. I believe it is a clean fracture, cased in plaster of Paris, quite successfully. I am assured that there will be no weakness left in the limb—"one leg will be as sthrong as the other, and that one, when I have done with the job, a thrifle sthronger if anything." The local doctor turns out to be a clever surgeon—an Irishman, need I say?

'The fracture is in the thigh—"A beautiful place (he says), it might have been knee or hip"—I suppose I ought to be grateful. I believe I am really not displeased.

'It was quite a curious, not at all disagreeable, sensation to wake up to life again in this completely strange room—in this foreign atmosphere brought over to England with as much success as the furniture or the pictures. In parenthesis—for it would really not interest you to know further details of the mere fact—I have broken this thigh-bone of mine in trying to jump a certain ditch on the property of the Comte de Braye. The mare came down—and so did I. I remember nothing but the coming down; and how little those two words express my sudden and violent experience!

'That was ten days ago. I believe I had a slight concussion.

The Comte, happily, has had a wide and varied experience of

falls. "*Palsambleu*, yes, in *le Steeple Chase* or *le Foxhunt*, etc.!" He knew better than to have me untimely worried back to consciousness; and so, except for a few vague spells of glimmering knowledge of discomfort and struggle, the entity that is Ughtred lay in abeyance—a blankness as vast as non-existence, a night as profound as the grave's—till three days ago, when quite gently it came back to its clay and was interested too much to realise at first the physical disabilities.

'I awoke, dear John Gordon, and the first thing I became aware of was a gentle amber light. In this diffused and mellow radiance certain objects next began to outline themselves: the sweep of amber silk curtains against a drawn grey blind, the latter flapping now and again, but discreetly, with the breeze on the open window behind it. A fat-paunched citron-wood bureau then caught the subdued gleam that penetrated into the room. A Venetian mirror over the chimney-piece reflected a dim picture on the opposite panel. Under the mirror the carved wood mantelshef protruded hood-like over the deep tiled hearth; and on this hearth, which I could watch comfortably from my pillow, burned two logs of wood.

'Before the hearth a huge white bearskin. My bed, I next found, had amber silk curtains, draped so as to exclude most of the room. My hand, moving, discovered the texture of the finest silk in my coverlet; but the shadow in which I was lying precluded my discovering the colour. Then, suddenly sentient of myself again, I felt as if one half of my anatomy was turned to stone—an astounding leaden heaviness pinning me most unpleasantly to the bed: my plaster of Paris, as yet unexplained. *Per contra*, my head appeared to me of an admirable lightness; and as I turned it experimentally on the pillow I found that I was not alone. Even as I moved someone who had been sitting patiently at the head of the bed rose and bent over me: I saw a nimbus of cloudy hair. Then the shadowy outline of a voice—a voice delicately dimmed said:

"*Grace à Dieu!* You are better?"

"I am quite well," I said. At that moment I thought I had never felt so well in life.

"But you must not talk," said the twilight voice; "I will send the nurse."

'I heard the door close, and I was left with a breath of violets about me, mingling with the pungent smell of burning

logs. And after that the nurse—my dear John Gordon, I have a nurse. I lie at the mercy of a creature of the sex which, with one exception, is noxious to me—a creature who contrives to infuse a horrible coquetry into a brisk, terribly professional, terribly cheerful manner; a creature with cuffs and collar of an impregnable stiffness and polish, in crackling print, with a cap tied under her chin, with rosy cheeks and black eyes. The unutterable person can scarcely be more than twenty-five.

‘She told me what had happened to me—in disgustingly technical language. She initiated me to the mysteries of plaster of Paris. She supported my head with one cuffed hand and held the rim of a tumbler relentlessly against my teeth with the other. Her hand reeked of coal-tar soap. She said “Come now” to me, as if I had been a baby or a dog.

‘When the doctor came, an hour later, she stood by me with a proprietary look and gave information regarding my private concerns after a fashion which I can only describe as unpardonable. I saw that I must speak now or for ever after hold my peace, as the gruesome marriage service has it.

“Go out of the room, please,” I said.

‘She stared at me. She had just described my temperature as normal: she could not pretend I was delirious. “Go out of the room, please,” I repeated firmly. “I want to speak to the doctor.”’

‘That alert personage interchanged a glance with his satellite: “Let us humour him,” it said. So I was humoured to the extent desired. Then, as man to man, I spoke to the doctor.

‘I first demanded, then reasoned, and finally implored to be delivered. I threatened to throw myself into a fever. I represented my valet as neater-handed than Phyllis, more to be trusted than— All I got in return was “Ah, now!” uproarious laughter, an adamant determination, adamant refusal underneath. My dear Master, your pupil in fact is still the most abject of slaves under the dominion of Cuffs! But at least the ministering angel (who must have been listening at the door during my heated discussion with Dr. O’Grady) has replaced her maddening cheerfulness, her still more maddening archness, by a vengeful severity. She does her duty on the lines best described, in nursery parlance, as hoity-toity.

'I am sure I don't know why I should be writing all this nonsense to you. But, except for my stone leg, I am perfectly well: forbidden anything in the shape of study: and, despite the kindness of my most kind host, have necessarily long hours to while away in solitude.

'Shall I ever send you this letter? It would take more audacity than your old pupil possesses, dear Master, to imagine that in your untiring life of mental activity you could find a sufficiently listless hour to be interested or even entertained thereby. And yet! The proper study of mankind is man. (As a matter of fact, personally, I deny the aphorism; but I do not think you do.) Though you live apart from humanity more than most, humanity, more especially that of your boys, is, I know, a favourite study with you. Where they are concerned you can quote the trite *Nihil humanum*. . . . To me, unworthy, you have always given a special place.

'All these excuses for my unconscionable outpourings which, after all, I may never send! Yet I am glad to shape and fix my impressions; and this afternoon I have had three visitors, each of whom has left me singular and varied impressions.

'First my hostess, the Comtesse Aglaé. To myself I like to call her Aglaé for the mere pleasure of the liquid Greek echo of the word. She came into the room with my after-luncheon coffee and drove the aggressive Cap and Cuffs from the field. Cap and Cuffs sniffed defiance as she went. She hates the lady's gentle presence for some inexplicable reason, for some reason at least only comprehensible to one acquainted with the intricate working of the feminine mind.

'She took the chair by my bed—she, Aglaé, the only possible "she" that my field of thought has ever admitted. My eyes rested on her with relief. They had surveyed—and how unwillingly!—for a solid hour before, ramparts of cuffs round red hands that reeked, perhaps only in my imagination, even to my pillow of coal-tar soap: of collar round that rubicund, aggressively pretty, countenance of my undesired attendant.

'Here was something different indeed. Folds of diaphanous grey about a face of pearl-like delicacy; slender, slender white hands restfully folded. A scarf lay about her shoulders, faintly violet. I have never seen her without a scarf. It becomes her as a trail of mist the crescent moon.

'She sat with me, I think, not more than ten minutes,



during which we said to each other scarcely as many sentences. If one lay on the hilltop, gazing at Phoebe in the night sky, one would not ask to talk!

" "You are better to-day?" she said.

" "I am very well," I answered, as before.

'So I was—just at that moment. I was trying to find out the colour of her eyes. She sat with her back to the light: I could only see that they are soft—soft and deep and indeterminedly twilight-hued—and that when she smiles her eyelids contract in a way that changes their expression of dreamy sadness into one of very subtle sweetness.

'Round her throat, hanging down to her knee, she wears a long chain of marvellous workmanship, in many different shades of gold—Venetian, I should think. And from it depends a large enamel heart studded with opals and diamonds. I wondered, vaguely, what was in that locket. Not a lock of the Comte's vanished hair? . . . The locket lay almost between her fingers as she sat. As I looked I saw that she was holding something else. She leaned forward, resting her elbow on the bed, and held the something towards me—a quite withered sprig.

" "Do you know what it is?" she questioned, smiling with that gracious drawing together of her eyelids.

" "No."

'I extended my hand: I could not reach it. She had to rise and bend over me. She laid it in my palm: a sprig of wild thyme. Faded and crushed, it sent yet a jet of pungency to my nostrils.

" "That was in your hand," she said, "when you were carried in like one dead!"

'She smiled no more as she spoke the last words; but her glance, dilating on me almost with a tragic gravity, seemed to take me wholly into a realm of shadowy sorrow. It was as if a drifting cloud had swept across my moon.

" "I thought you dead," she went on, "when your hand relaxed in mine and gave me this."

'She took the sprig back and stood erect, looking down at me. An essence as of violets in sunshine seems to lurk about her. It blended with that sharp memory of the thyme that still hung on my senses.

" "*Vous voilà tout pâle,*" she said suddenly.

'There came a thundering knock at the door. I started

violently. She might have said now, "*Vous voilà tout rouge,*" for with a leg in plaster of Paris one's nerves are apt to be set on edge.

'She took just one step back from the bed, smiled, but with lips only, her eyes a little vague.

"That could only be Annibal," she said with a thread of mockery. "*Entrez, mon ami!*" she called, raising her voice.

'The Comte's great laugh preceded him.

"Ah, famous—famous! In a month we shall be steeple-chasing again! Eh! I could put up with the same complaint for the sake of the same remedies. Ahaha, the little English nurse! Has she got a colour, that one? Has she got black eyes? And so *propre*, with the white collars and cuffs. And the cap? *Est-ce assez gentil* that little cap? Eh, eh! *Saprelotte.*" He broke off. "Let me not drive you away, my dear."

"No—I was going."

'The words floated back very gently. She was going indeed, drawing her misty folds about her and closing the door soundlessly. She carried the sprig of thyme away with her, inadvertently, no doubt. Of course, inadvertently: I should be the lowest of coxcombs to think otherwise.

'Her husband let himself drop into the chair, legs wide apart, and sat staring at the closed door with a sudden fixity and hardness in his blue eyes. Then he drew a gusty sigh, and turning to me plunged volubly and noisily into conversation—if conversation it can be called where one side is all tongue and the other merely ear.

'He gave me a vivid and not unentertaining account of two or three accidents of his own, and of severe concussions and fractures among his friends.

"*Palsambleu*—the best story is that of Antoine de Vaudry, a famous gaillard, that one! A cousin of my wife's. Ah, he's dead, the poor lad. He, who ought to have broken his neck a hundred times—for, in regard of the mad feats he attempted, Solange, my little Satan, is not in it. Died *tout bêtement* in his bed of a pneumonia like any grocer of the lot! . . . Well, I had a fall in the Ardennes. It was Antoine himself knocked me off; cannoned against me at a bit of a ditch—hunting accident, one can't bear malice, you know—over a little nothing of a ditch, and I must make such a fool of myself as to break my leg, just like you, *mon cher*, though I chose below the knee. Well,

Antoine did everything for me : kept the fools from moving me till they got me a litter, and held me while I was being set, just like a little brother. He was hunting that year with me from a box I had at Viel-Salm. We got on very well together—all three."

" "All three—who was the third?" (That was my contribution to the conversation.)

" "The third—my wife, *palsambleu*! Who else? Where was I? Ah, yes, Antoine nursed me as tenderly as even your pretty *garde* would—I won't say as agreeably, aha! I got on very well—very well. They took off my splints. No plaster—*mille tonnerres*, I am not the man to be put in plaster! Good thing it was not in fashion then. They took off the splints, I say. I got to the arm-chair. There I sat with my leg out on a stool before me, as proud as a peacock. It was only December; I would not miss all the hunting. In comes my little Antony. 'Bravo!' he says to me; 'what a cure we have made of you!' 'You may say so,' say I. 'The doctor says this leg will be stronger than the other, they always say that, you know.' 'Bravo!' he says again. 'But what are you cocking it up like that on a stool for?' 'Because one goes on little by little,' say I. 'Bah!' says he, 'you're coddling, Annibal—you're coddling!' 'I!' I exclaim, the mustard getting to my nose. 'It's like your impudence. I've had a very serious accident. I'm not going to play the fool.' 'You're coddling,' he says again. 'I love you too much to allow such degeneration. Away with that stool!' 'Touch it not!' I roar. He was too quick for me; he had it by one corner. I clutch, he jerks; and, *palsambleu*, away goes the stool, down goes my leg, and if he did not break it again for me, ahaha! I'll be canonised! Ahahaha! He actually broke it again."

"I joined in the laugh. It was too infectious to be resisted, though the point of the joke scarcely appealed to me. I feel an instinctive dislike for Antoine, I am glad he is dead. In the middle of his laugh the good man's countenance clouded: "Ah, I have regretted him these three years, that one! A fellow after my own heart. I used to dream of marrying him to my little Solange, there. That would have been a pair! I should have left them all my money . . . I who have no children!" The cloud deepened to a thunder-darkness. His face, so made for laughter and good-humour, assumed the frown of an angry

Poseidon. He jumped from his chair as if stung. "No children! . . . I!" He struck his muscular flank. "I—no children! Figure to yourself that! Fate plays those tricks upon a man!"

'He took a stormy turn to the window and back again; then he halted by my bed and broke into an angry laugh.

"And when I tell you that's what I married for—for children, nothing else. What I wanted was little scamps, a regiment of them . . . built like me. Eh, how many times I have seen them in my dreams, running about me, in little corduroys and gaiters! I've seen myself hoisting them up on their little ponies. Ah, well——"

'He flung himself into the chair. It creaked beneath the massive load. He stretched out his legs again, sat with a fixed stare at that door, out of which he had watched her pass. Then he burst into his hard, unmirthful laugh again. "And to think that I chose my wife among a thousand. Chose her for sake of race, of blood, my friend! . . . Ah, if you had seen her then you would have understood; you would have allowed yourself to be taken in, just like me. . . . I was hunting at Fontainebleau that year, and she was out most days on her thoroughbreds. I used to keep behind her for the mere pleasure of watching her figure in the saddle. She seemed made of steel and flowers; and at the end of the hardest day never a line of fatigue on that face of ivory, never a shadow under those eyes. Look at her now—after ten years' marriage. She'd feel faint if she got on a horse—always huddled in her shawls . . ."

'His lip protruded, his eye drooped, brooding. I listened, with the most complicated feelings, to these confidences; these unsolicited and extraordinary revelations to me, the celibate—the one who, of his own choice, stands outside. It was as if he had taken me by the elbow and forced me to the threshold of the temple, forced me to look in upon the rites of a religion which, all unknown, was yet abhorred and forsworn by me. At length he raised his eyes and met mine unconsciously fixed in painful interest upon him.

"The excellent fool of a *curé* at our home in Brabant tells me it is Providence. Well, Providence has made jolly fun of me, as you would say over here. That's a fact. Me!—me—childless!"

'He strode towards the middle of the room and stretched

his great frame with an unconscious arrogance. "I to be the father of nothing but still-born children! *Des morts-nés!*" he repeated; and the words rang out like a knell. "And my gardener there, a sort of rag of a fellow, has you his half-dozen living *bambins!* Well, fate plays you these tricks," he harped back on his bitter refrain as he came slowly down the room, his fingers in his beard, biting the long tufts of it. "Take it for said, my friend, don't marry out of the hunting-field—marry some soft lazy puss who likes lolling on cushions."

'He went to the door and suddenly paused. "I don't allow Solange to hunt. *C'est une brave enfant.*" On that he left me. These struck me as two of the most irrelevant remarks I had ever heard.

'John Gordon, my dear friend, am I not right in my estimate of marriage? This conversation with my host has left in me a strange turmoil of feelings. But predominant is an exultant sense of personal liberty. Thank the stars which presided at the combination of instincts and aspirations that forms my thinking self, there is no sacrifice in my renunciation of the common lot. Artemis, my free and austere goddess, give me the fields, the woods, the passion of the chase! Let my pulses throb for no baser pleasure than the singing of the wind as I fly through space, the achievement of the mountain heights, the tussle for mastery in the assault of the waves. Leave me my hearth at night solitary; leave me my cherished aloofness of spirit, my freedom, in fine. A man has but this after all when he comes into the world: his soul and his five senses. Must his first act of conscious vitality be to fling himself and them into slavery? I have had to watch my host with his great hairy athlete's hand tear aside the veil that wraps one of those intimate sordid tragedies that marriage brings. I shudder still at the vision of that soul laid bare, the more piteous because unwitting.

'Did I say that predominant was a feeling of selfish personal exultation? I said wrong. It is not so. Predominant is an intense pity, an intense regret for her. Her lovely youth deflowered without the honour of its natural crown of motherhood—that is tragic. But what lies behind that, the union incongruous, the mating that is no mating—that seems too hideous for me to contemplate. I ought to have known nothing about it.

'He married for paternity. And she? She of whom even his coarse language could raise such an image, as she rode, lightly swinging before him on her thoroughbred, "spun steel and flowers!" . . . with her "face of ivory" that defied fatigue. . . . The fates only know what ethereal dream of maiden fancy she followed to this cost. He wanted but paternity—and to him she is now . . . a broken woman, "huddled in the shawl!" Semele in her wreath of mist!

'I was not, as you can conceive, much in humour for conversation; a fact which Nurse Scrubbs—yes, dear John Gordon, Master, that is the name of Cuffs!—was not slow in discovering and therefore adding to her large burden of resentment against me. She was destined this afternoon to put up with yet another grievance.

'I told you I had a third visitor. She presented herself shortly before tea. Nurse Scrubbs had just ministered my tonic. There is not the least reason why I should have a tonic, unless it be to enable me to bear the fret of her irritating presence. A single knock came at the door—sharp and challenging—and before I had time to exclaim "Come in," the very unexpected figure of Mademoiselle Solange de Flodore marched across the threshold. I lay, my medicine-glass poised, staring, and Nurse Scrubbs stared too with those sloe-black eyes so much admired of the Comte.

'The young lady came up to the bed and said "Good-afternoon" to me in a prim tone that started me into laughter. Then she turned and faced Scrubbs, who was regarding her with the most fulminating displeasure. Scrubbs apparently hates me, if I am to judge by the jerks of disapproval with which she accomplishes the smallest service (I have never seen anyone toss her head so often in the course of an hour), and yet she is ready to fly at the throat of any woman that dares to enter my sick-room. Explain me that, if you can.

'Miss Solange faced her, as I have remarked, and I laughed again: by my soul the nurse had met her match. One would have sworn that she resented Scrubbs as much as Scrubbs resented her.

'"I want to talk to Sir Ughtred," she said, much as I had remarked some three days ago to the doctor. "Is that his medicine? I will give it to him."

'Her brown eyes, which had been warring with Scrubbs' black ones, now moved towards the open door.

"It's my duty to give the patient his medicine," snapped Scrubbs. I saw her cuff hover. Hastily I drank the nauseous concoction. "Take it," said I loftily. "You needn't wait," said Mademoiselle Solange, with the arrogance of an Infanta, "I will call you when I and Sir Ughtred have had our talk."

Scrubbs stood, breathing battle. But my Walküre made a gesture, flashed a fire from those hawk-eyes of hers, and unaccountably—collar, cuffs, and all—my nurse collapsed morally and marched out physically, banging the door with unprofessional fury.

"When pain and anguish rack the brow . . ." I murmured sarcastically.

The young lady failed to catch the allusion. She sat down unsmiling. If she was embarrassed she did not show it. I confess I was amused. Scrubbs was routed; that was a good deal already for Scrubbs' victim.

"I didn't see why I shouldn't pay you a visit, since every one does," she remarked.

Her hair was plaited in one long school-girl braid. It grows in perfectly audacious luxuriance, and is of a shameless carrot-red against the whiteness of her forehead. That forehead, dear John Gordon, is a low bold arch, very well in keeping with those other bold arches her eyebrows, and that firm, cruel, open curve of her mouth, which naturally lays bare her teeth. She looks as if she were always panting a little from some rapid course. Decidedly, Walküre is the name that suits her.

"Quite so," I said. "I am sorry I cannot do the honours of my apartment. But with a stone limb—I have nothing to offer you either, unless you would like some tonic!"

She disregarded my pleasantry as she had disregarded my quotation. She was pursuing her own thought.

"It was your fault, you know," she remarked.

"My fault——?" I was politely anxious to understand.

"You lifted her too soon."

"I lifted . . . whom?"

The characteristic eyebrows contracted.

"How stupid you are!" said the brilliant eyes underneath; and "Your mare, your mare," said the mouth. "You lifted her at least a yard too soon. No wonder she landed short."

"Well," I said gaily, "when I emerge from plaster, I shall take her over it properly." I broke off; a quiver had passed across her face.



"Haven't they told you?" There was a high note of not unkind emotion in her voice; but it quickly changed before an unmistakable ring of scorn. "You never thought even of asking, I suppose?"

"I hitched myself heavily, to lean on my elbow. That scorn of hers was stirring in me the old sensation of antagonism, and I felt, besides, towards her the angry repulsion that instinctively leaps against the messenger of unpleasant tidings. And bad tidings were on her lips.

"If you will kindly be more explicit. The mare——?"

"The mare is dead."

"Dead!" I ejaculated stupidly.

"After such preliminaries the news could hardly come as a surprise; and yet the word struck me with a stab. Dead, my pretty Bess! Dead! that creature of fire and air, whose feet sang upon the turf. . . . Dead, that embodiment of beautiful, swift, harmonious life. I let myself fall back on my pillow. I was ashamed that my hard, bright-eyed visitor should peer upon what no doubt appeared to her a weak-minded sensibility. Yet Bess had been my friend; except for these new acquaintances I had no other friend, after you. And by my folly I had lost her.

"Her back was broken," proceeded the informant briefly.

"I gave a kind of suppressed groan. How ugly and how horrible that suffering—perhaps a long agony of suffering—should have been added to the crushing of the life out of a creature, in whom life was all lovely. Then, as if the strange girl had read my thoughts, she went on:

"She did not linger long—I saw to that. They were all so occupied about you." With eyes fixed vaguely on the amber canopy above my head, I could yet feel the scorn on her lips. "I galloped off for my rifle," she went on; "I shot her."

"You shot her!" I exclaimed, rolling round again to stare in disgust.

"I suppose," she retorted, "you would have preferred her to lie struggling. I ought to have stood and snivelled—that would have been womanly. You're just like my aunt: 'Oh, Solange—how could you?' I shot her through the head."

"She rose with a sudden spring and bent over me as I lay staring once more at the canopy. Her face was so close that

it almost hurt me to look at it. I had an extraordinarily vivid vision of passion upon it—eyes flaming, lips trembling; a pallor, almost a flicker as of white fire, upon all the features.

““ I hate you! ” said this extraordinary creature. She was panting; her young breast heaved, almost touching me. The next instant, in a whirlwind of swift movement, she was gone.

‘ Upon my hand, outstretched in determined aloofness from the threatened contact, something had fallen; it was a tear.

‘ Singular child! So—she hates me! Almost I could say I hate her, too. Yet, why should she have the power of raising so strong a feeling?

‘ I lay tingling with irritation; furious even against that tear that burned where it fell; tingling almost as with a reflex of the unwarrantable fire that seemed to emanate from her. When Comtesse Aglaé has been with me her influence is that of an evening stillness, a shadowy rest for mind and nerves. If light there has been, it has stolen upon the soul like moon-rays. The other disturbs, provokes, challenges—nay, even conveys a sense of threatening devastation: to me the very type of the dreaded feminine. It is for that, that I almost hate her.

‘ The Comte said: “ *C’est une brave enfant.* ” Oddly, with her tear upon my hand, I too believe she is that. May she, one day, find a Hannibal to her taste! ’

(*To be continued.*)

